

Vol 51

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Sea Swallow

Annual Report of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society



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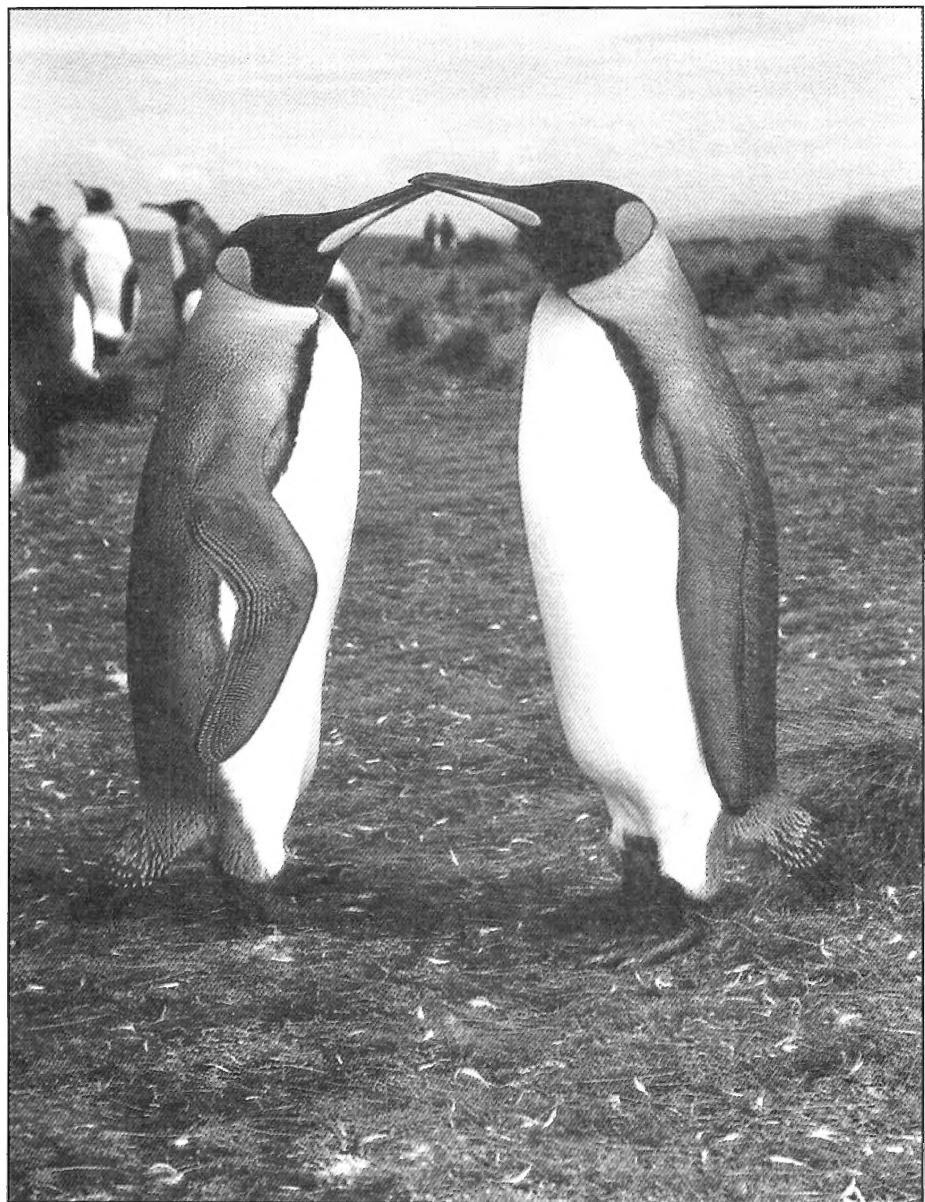


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King Penguins (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) Grytviken, South Georgia, February 2002.
Photo: Surg Lt SJ Barton Royal Navy, *HMS Montrose*.

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For details of Local Representatives and other useful addresses, see page 64.

Subscription rates: Full and associate members £8 (£7 if covenanted) annually. Due 1 January.

Library rates: Cost of *Sea Swallow*, (£8) plus postage.

Membership: has been widened from the RN to include those, regardless of nationality, who share a common background of the sea.

Aims and Activities: The primary aim of the Society is to promote a forum for the exchange of information on seabirds, and of landbirds at sea, by members for whom birdwatching is a spare-time recreation and hobby. The secondary aim is to co-ordinate the efforts of individual members using standardised recording methods so that observations can be of value to the professional ornithologist ashore. In addition to the promotion of observations afloat, the RNBWS organises fieldwork and expeditions, usually in cooperation with the Army and RAF Ornithological Societies.

RNBWS Record Forms: Standardised forms for recording Seabirds and Landbirds at sea, Seabird Census sheets and Birds examined in the Hand (BEH) forms have been designed for use at sea. Stocks are held by The Honorary Secretary. Please give detailed requirements and enclose a large (A4) stamped and self addressed envelope.

Completed Record: Forms (both Seabirds and Landbirds) should be sent to the Editor of *Sea Swallow*.

Material for publication in Sea Swallow should be sent to the Editor. Instructions to authors can be found on page 64.

An application form for membership is at page 61 of this edition of *Sea Swallow*.

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PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD

The tumultuous events of 2001 certainly maintained the high profile of our Services, and not least the RN and RM. Whilst operations continued to restore good government in Sierra Leone, the major deployment to the Middle East for Exercise *Saif Sareea* began. The events of the autumn and their aftermath need no rehearsal here. Throughout the period, longer-term activated tasks such as the national deterrent, general service duties in the West Indies, N and S Atlantic, and representational activities in Antarctica, have all been sustained. We have a few glimpses of this world-spanning background in *Sea Swallow 51*.

I am also acutely conscious that sea-going life for our MN members becomes increasingly pressurised and challenging with each year that goes by. Statutory changes, commercial drivers, and the pace of technological advance have all-transformed the shipping industry scene in the half-century of RNBWS' existence.

However, as our Chairman comments in his Foreword, whilst acknowledging the huge demands on you all, we do need to hear more from you. Our field observations are the vital component which has earned the reputation of *Sea Swallow*, and which, alone, will ensure the maintenance and update of RNBWS' unique computer data-base. I certainly look forward to contributing from a trip to the Arctic in summer 2002.

David Dobson, President

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

You will have read in the Minutes of our last AGM of the tough decision which confronted us related to publications. Quite simply, as I warned back in 1999, our human and financial resources will not support a contribution to the new tri-service journal *OSPREY* in addition to the commitment to *Sea Swallow* which a majority of you wish to see continue. In communicating this outcome to my fellow chairmen, I have assured them that we remain committed to joint activity wherever feasible and appropriate. In particular, we hope to see a resurgence of expedition and fieldwork activity.

Meanwhile, *Sea Swallow 51* contains our regular features and some excellent articles. I have been pleased to achieve a few observations during my travels around the Fleet, and we have a bumper crop from our Editor's deployment in the S Atlantic theatre. We must, however, have more if we are to avoid the accusation that we are clinging onto an unsustainable *modus operandi*. Over to you!

I am very pleased to welcome back Captain Neil Cheshire, our Merchant Navy Vice President, in the role of seabird observation analyst. Modern electronic communications will assist him to handle this whilst continuing his sea-going life as Master of *RV Franklin* in Australasian waters. Meanwhile, whilst Dr Bill Bourne has passed on this baton, his contribution as Honorary Adviser remains very plain in this edition. I am enormously grateful to him for his continued generous support for RNBWS.

Michael Barritt, Chairman

EDITORIAL

Another year, a new job and publication of *Sea Swallow 51*. Having had a busy two years on *HMS Montrose* including a seven month deployment to West and South Africa, the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and home via Brazil and the Canaries, it would seem my sea-going life is over. I have started a new appointment in Abbey Wood, Bristol responsible for the design of Supply compartments in future ships.

It has not been easy to publish *Sea Swallow* this year. As already highlighted by both the President and Chairman, contributions, both articles and records, continue to diminish. However, those received for inclusion this year create a theme of canals and islands for this issue. Additionally, there is another article from Gabriel Banica in Romania, which furthers his studies around the Danube Delta region. We remain committed to the production of an annual publication, but there will come a time where the available material makes it non-viable to maintain independence. Without your input, the transition to publishing as part of a tri-Service bulletin becomes more of a reality.

From the views received from the recent questionnaire, it is evident the majority of you do not want to see that outcome. To ensure *Sea Swallow* continues in its current form, it needs articles and other input. In the words of Kitchener - *Sea Swallow* needs YOU!

Gary Lewis, Editor



Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) Cap Rihr, Morocco, November 2001.

Photo: Sam Alexander.

OBSERVATIONS OF SEABIRDS RECEIVED IN 2001/2**By N.G.Cheshire**

This year has seen a welcome increase in the number of observers and the volume of observations. The main increase has been from passengers and supernumeraries. There were no reports from the Merchant Navy, perhaps as a result of the decline of Western European fleets, a reduction in crew numbers and the exponential increase in paperwork in recent years! Steve Copsey made the most of an enviable voyage to the west coast of South America, perhaps the area of greatest seabird diversity in the world, going on to the Falklands and South Georgia before his return to the UK. David Balance sent detailed reports from four-fifths of a circumnavigation via South Africa, Australia, Panama and the USA. A large collection of detailed notes covering thirteen long voyages made as a passenger from 1951 to 1965 has been received from Mr.S.Gorton Green. Time and space has unfortunately precluded their inclusion this year and they are worthy of a separate article. All observers are thanked for their detailed and interesting reports.

OBSERVERS

Mr D.K. Balance (DB) *m.v.Palliser Bay*, NW Europe-Capetown-Fremantle, Sept-Oct 2001, (29N) *m.v Queensland Star*, Brisbane-NZ-Panama-Kingston-Philadelphia, Oct-Dec 2001 (31N)

Capt M.K. Barritt RN (MKB), *HMS Bulldog*, Irish Sea,(1C) June 2001, *HMS Scott* , North Atlantic, Aug 2001,(1C)

Messrs P,M and Mrs K. Cartwright, *m.v. Pride of Bilbao*, England-Bilbao, Sept 2001(2N)

CWEM(R) S.Copsey (SC), *HMS Edinburgh*, UK-Azores-Puerto Rico-Cartagena-Panama-Guayquil-Callao-Valpariso-Antofagasta-Caldera-Coquimbo-Valpariso-Magellan Strait-Falklands-Montevideo-Falklands-South Geogia-Falklands-Rio-UK,(46R)

Mr S. Hales and Mr.D.Hallett (SH&DH), Plymouth to Santander and return, Oct 2001,(16N)

Cdr G.Lewis RN (GL), *HMS Montrose*, UK-South Africa-Falklands-South Georgia-Brazil-Canaries-UK, Oct 2001-March 2002 (13N)

Mrs J. Pentreath (JP), yacht *Salvation Jane*, Yarmouth IOW-Cherbourg and return, May 2001, Yarmouth IOW-Kinsale-Helford River June-July 2001.(4C)

Mr M. Baines per Mr D.Saunders (MB) *m.v.Sanco Sea*, offshore from Rio de Janero Brazil (1N)

Mr.R.Wyn (RW) RRS *Charles Darwin*, North Atlantic, July/Aug 2000 (1N)

R-RNBWS Report Sheets, C-RNBWS Census Sheets, B-RNBWS Bird in hand Forms, N - other notes, P - Photographs.



Magellanic Penguin (*Spheniscus magellanicus*) at nest burrow. 23 Nov 1996, Sealion Island, Falkland Island. *Photo:* Sam Alexander.

NOTES ON SPECIES

(Dates refer to 2001 unless otherwise mentioned. Positions are given in degrees and decimals of a degree, nm = nautical miles)

PENGUINS SPHENISCIDAE

King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonicus*. One seen at 52S 54.6W east of the Falklands on 3 Oct by SC.GL counted 300+ at Stromness whaling station South Georgia on 11 Feb 02.

Gentoo Penguin *Pygoscelis papua*. GL saw 150+ at Stromness S.Georgia on 11 Feb 02. SC saw 40 as he left East Cove Falklands on 25 Sept, another 40 north of Cumberland Bay S.Georgia on 29 Sept and 50+ at 53.8S 37.8W near Bird Island on 1st Oct.

Adelie Penguin *Pygoscelis adeliae*. GL came across one on the beach at Stromness S.Georgia on 11 Feb 02.

Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*. Six were seen by GL at 34.4S 18.2E 20 nm south from Cape of Good Hope on 3 Jan 02 and two nearby at 34.9S 19.1E by DB on 4 Oct.

Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus*. GL recorded 30+ north of the Falklands at 51.2S 59.2W on 28 Jan 02.

Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*. Eight birds in Valpariso Hbr.(33S) on 18 Jun were described by SC-juveniles with dark heads and adults with single breast bands. He also saw 20 at Coquimbo Bay (30S) on 7 Sep. Whilst at Valpariso from 12-18 Jul he saw 10-20 daily with both *humboldti* and *magellanicus* present.

ALBATROSSES *DIOMEDEIDAE*

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans*. On passage from S.Georgia to the Falklands SC recorded one north of Bird Island on 1 Oct, one adult at 52.6S 45.6W on 2 Oct, an adult and imm at 52S 53.5W and six at 52S 55W on the 3 Oct. Further north he saw three at 39.9S 54.4W on 11 Oct and four at 36.5S 51.9W the next day. Approaching the Falklands from the east GL recorded one imm at 44.7S 42.7W on 14 Jan 02, an adult and imm at 50.8S 55.1W on 16 Jan 02. He also saw one sub-adult to the north of the Falklands at 51.2S 59.2W on 28 Jan and on the way to S. Georgia two imm at 51.7S 51.2W on 8 Feb' 02 and three the next day at 52.6S 40.2W. Crossing the South Indian Ocean from Capetown to Fremantle, 4-14 Oct, DB saw small numbers each day with a maximum count of nine at 39.1S 38.9E on 6th and another nine the next day at 39.8S 45.5E. In the Tasman Sea DB saw one at 33.9S 163.0E and two at 35.1S 164.7E on 2 Nov, six at 37.3S 168.5E, nine at 37.9S 169.5E and six at 38.8S 170.7E on 3 Nov. In the SW Pacific east of NZ, DB recorded four at 36.5S 176.8E, two at 36.5S 178.2E and two at 36.6S 179.1W on 8 Nov. Further east he saw one at 36.6S 174.9W on 9 Nov, two at 35.4S 159.1W and one at 35S 156.2W on 10 Nov.

Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora*. SC described one Northern Royal 'sanfordi' seen off Chile at 37.1S 73.9W on 20 Jul.

Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata*. SC counted singles and pairs totalling 20 in five hours off Peru from 8.5S 79.9W to 9.6S 79.1W on 10 Jun. He also saw a single the next day at 12S 77.2W off Callao. DB recorded two at 2S 89W south of the Galapagos on 21 Nov.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris*. Heading south off the coast of Chile SC saw the first two (adult +imm) at 33.1S 74.3W on 10 Jul. He also had 20 adults and imm accompanying his ship at 37.1S 73.9W to 37.5S 74W on 20 July and 30+ at 48.4S 76.1W off southern Chile on 22 Jul. There were numerous records from Falklands/S.Georgia area. Larger counts included 40+ at 52.6S 60W on 4 Sep (SC) and 50+ at 51.2S 59.2W on 28 Jan 02(GL). Further north SC recorded eight at 40S 57.1W on 13 Sept. Heading south offshore from Namibia DB saw the first two at 27.5S 12.6E on 3 Oct. Heading across the South Indian Ocean from Capetown to Fremantle DB saw small numbers most days with a maximum of six at 38.1S 94.2E on 12 Oct. In the Tasman Sea he recorded eight adults and an imm. at 37.3S 168.5E on 3 Nov and seven at 37.9S 169.5E the same day.

Shy Albatross *Diomedea cauta*. DB reported two imm at 29.4S 14.4E off SW Africa on 3 Oct, one in the South Indian Ocean at 39.8S 45.5E on 7 Oct and another at 35.5S 104.9E on 13 Oct.

Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos*. In the eastern South Atlantic, GL recorded one adult at 34.5S 3W on 7 Jan 02 and another the next day at 35.9S 8.6W. On 9 Jan

02 he counted 400+ (about 90% adult 10% juveniles) at Edinburgh Anchorage Tristan da Cunha where the species breeds. Heading south towards the Cape, DB saw one at 27.9S 13.1W, three at 29.4S 14.4E on 3 Oct and an imm at 33.8S 18.1E on 4 Oct. Offshore from Rio DS saw one at 23.4S 42.4W on 4 Feb 02 and another off southern Brazil at 27S 48.4W on 6 Feb 02. Crossing the South Indian Ocean from Capetown to Fremantle in Oct, DB recorded the species in small numbers on most days with a maximum counts of eight at 40S 66E on the 9th and seven at 32.9S 112.4E approaching Western Australia on 14th.

Grey-headed Albatross *Diomedea chrysostoma*. SC reported one well north off Peru at 9.6S 79.1W on 10 June, one off Chile at 27.1S 71.4W on 22 Jun and another at 23.6S 70.5W on 23 June. Around the Falklands SC saw one at 52S 53.5W on 3 Oct. GL saw one at 51.7S 51.2W on 5 Feb 02 and one at 51.7S 51.2W on 8 Feb 02. GL also saw two near the Argentine coast at 41.6S 61.9W on 27 Feb 02. Near S.Georgia SC reported 10 at 54S 36.8W on 1 Oct and 20+ at 53.8S 37.8W the same day. In the eastern South Atlantic GL reported two at 34.5S 4.2E on 6 Jan 02.

Buller's Albatross *Diomedea bulleri*. One reported by DB well east of NZ at 36.6S 179.1W on 8 Nov.

Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria fusca*. GL saw two at Edinburgh Anchorage, Tristan da Cunha 37.1S 12.3W on 9 Jan 02. Also seen by DB in the South Indian Ocean with one at 38.7S 35.8E on 6 Oct, one at 39.8S 46.2E on 7 Oct and another single at 40S 58.1E on 8 Oct.

Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *Phoebetria palpebrata*. One was seen by SC at 53.8S 37.8W near Bird Island, S.Georgia on 1 Oct and another was seen further west by GL at 52.6S 40.2W on 9 Feb 02.



King Penguins (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*), Grytviken, S Georgia, February 2002.
Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy, *HMS Montrose*.

FULMARS FULMARINAE

Giant Petrel *Macronectes* sp. DB reported 17 at 39.8S 48.9E and 55 at 40S 66E in the South Indian Ocean on 7 and 9 Oct.

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*. SC recorded one white phase bird at 33.1S 74.2W off central Chile on 10 Jul, three at 37.1S 73.9W on 20 July and 10 including a white bird at 48.4S 76.1W on 22 Jul. Recorded in small to moderate numbers around the Falklands and South Georgia in Sep, Oct and Feb 02 by SC and GL. Larger concentrations included 120+ following SC's ship at 52.6S 60W just south of Falklands on 4 Sep and 20+ recorded by GL at Cumberland Bay S.Georgia on 10 Feb 02.

Northern Giant Petrel *Macronectes halli*. SC tentatively identified two birds as *halli* at 52S 55W west of Falklands on 3 Oct. GL reported three nearby at 50.9S 55.1W on 16 Jan 02. In the South Indian Ocean DB reported 2 imm at 36.9S 26.3E on 5 Oct.

Northern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*. DB saw 10 at 52.5N 3.1E near the Dutch coast on 16 Sept. SH&DH saw one SW from Brittany at 47.1N 5W on 23 Oct. Several records from MKB off Ireland during Aug including 12 at 54.3N 11.7W on 22nd, one at 54.3N 14.9W the same day and five at 55.5N 7.2W on 23rd. To the north RW counted eight dark phase birds from 22-31 Jul at 60N 7W.

Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides*. SC saw two on 1 Jul and one the next day at Caldera Bay Chile. 27S 70.9W. Going south he saw one at 32.7S 73.9W on 11 Jul, 10 at 48.4S 76.1W on 22 Jul and 10 on the Pacific side of Straits of Magellan on 23 Jul. Around the Falklands SC observed three at 50.9S 60.6W on 30 Aug, three at 51.4S 61W on 31 Aug, six at 51.9S 58. In the Tasman Sea DB recorded one at 37.3S 168.5E on 3 Nov.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense*. Heading south off Chile SC had 30 following his ship at 25.6S 71.3W on 5 Jul and c.300 following at 37.1S 73.9W on 20 Jul. Thereafter many reports from SC from Falklands and S.Georgia during Aug, Sep and Oct. To the north SC reported 50 at 40S 57.1W on 13 Sept and 60+ at 39.9S 54.4W on 11 Oct. In the South Indian Ocean DB had records on most days between Cape Town and Fremantle with 21 at 38.7S 35.8E on 6 Oct, 55 at 40S 66E on 9 Oct and 17 at 37.3S 97.7E on 12th. DB had several records from the Tasman Sea in early Nov with one at 33.5S 162.3E on the 2nd and 10 at 38.8S 170.7E on the 3rd.

Snow Petrel *Pagodroma nivea*. One recorded by GL in Cumberland Bay, S.Georgia on 10 Feb 02.

Narrow-billed Prion *Pachyptila belcheri*, **Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur*. Reported with varying degrees of confidence regarding specific identity. SC reported 200+ Narrow-billed at 31.8S 71.8W off Chile on 21 Jun and GL reported 200+ Narrow-billed at 52.6S 40.2W near S.Georgia on 9 Feb 02. He also reported four Fairy and one Narrow-billed at 50.9S 55.1W on 16 Jan 02. In the south Indian Ocean DB reported two Fairy Prions at 40S 58.1E on 8 Oct, six at 40S 66E and nine at 40S 68.5E on 9 Oct. DB also identified as Narrow-billed 49 at 40S 66E, 134 at 40S 68.5E on 9 Oct, 15 at 40.1S 75.8E and 244 at 39.5S 78.2E on 10 Oct.

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea*. SC saw two at 26.2S 71.2W off Chile on 22 Jun and several around South Georgia with three at 53.3S 41W on 28 Sep, one at 53.5S 40.1W the same day, four north of Bird Island on 1 Oct. GL had one at 52.6S 40.2W on 9 Feb 02. DB had good views of two at 38.1S 87.7E in the S. Indian Ocean on 11 Oct.

Kermadec Petrel *Pterodroma neglecta*. DB reported four on the 2 Nov at 33.5S 162.3E SE of Lord Howe Is. where it is a summer breeder on the 550 metre high off-lying stack, Ball's Pyramid. He also reported four pale birds on 13 Nov from 29.5S 135.6W.

Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana*. DB reported without details two dark phase birds on 14 Nov at 27.4S 130.3W, 220 nm south of Pitcairn and another dark bird at 26.3S 127.8W the same day. The birds reported south of Pitcairn could be the new dark Henderson Petrel *Pterodroma atrata* (Brooke, M de L and Rowe G 1996. Behavioural and molecular evidence for specific status of light and dark morphs of the Herald Petrel *Pterodroma heraldica*. *Ibis* 138: 420-432).

Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*. Usual records from around South Africa and eastern South Atlantic by DB and GL in Oct and Jan 02 with a maximum count by DB of 95 at 29.4S 14.4E on 3 Oct. On passage from Capetown to Fremantle DB recorded them on all but one day with a maximum count of 24 at 31.7S 114.9E as he approached Western Australia on 14 Oct. In the Tasman Sea DB had several flocks typical of the post breeding dispersal from NZ with the maximum of 40+ at 35.1S 164.6E on 2 Nov. He also had several interesting records in the South Pacific well east of NZ including 10 at 36.6S 174.9W and two at 36.6S 174.1E on 9 Nov (W), one at 36.2S 165.8W and one at 35.8S 163.7W on 9 Nov, three at 35.4S 159.1W, three at 35.2S 158W and one at 34.9S 156.2W on 10 Nov and the last at 33.7S 150W on 11 Nov.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*. Seen by DB in the South Indian Ocean from 39.5S 78.2E to 35.5S 104.9E, 10 Oct-13 Oct with max count of six at 38.3S 85E and six at 37.9S 95E.

Atlantic Petrel *Pterodroma incerta*. Sailing west from the Cape, GL saw two at 34.5S 0.5W, three at 34.5S 1.3W and two at 34.5S 3W on 7 Jan 02, one at 35.3S 7.3W on 8 Jan 02, three at 36.1S 15.3W and one at 35.8S 16.3W on 10 Jan 02, one at 36.1S 23.2W on 11 Jan 02, and two at 44.7S 42.7W on 14 Jan 02. Near the east coast of South America GL saw one off Argentina at 38S 56.3W on 28 Feb 02, two off southern Brazil at 33.1S 51.2W on 1 Mar 02, and five the next day at 27.1S 46.2W. DS recorded one at 26.1S 44.1W and two at 27.3S 46.7W off Brazil on 5 and 6 Feb 02. SC saw one at 35.4S 51.3W off Uruguay on 12 Oct.

Murphy's Petrel *Pterodroma ultima*. DB reported one at 28.8S 134W about 500 nm SW from Pitcairn on 13 Nov. He saw the bird close under the bow from where he was observing. It attempted to pick up what appeared to be a small squid churned up by the bow wave. Described as dark chocolate brown with pale bases to the under primaries and pale feathering at the base of the bill. Pink legs and feet were well seen.

Mottled Petrel *Pterodroma inexpectata*. One west of NZ at 38.8S 170.4E on 3 Nov (DB).

Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis*. In the South Atlantic GL saw one at 34.5S 4.2E on 6 Jan 02, one at 34.5S 0.5W on 7 Jan 02 and seven east of the Falklands at 51.7S 51.2W on 8 Feb 02. He also saw six at 41.5S 61.9W off east coast of South America. DS reported one off Rio at 23.6S 42.8W on 4 Feb 02. DB saw many *mollis* each day between Capetown and Fremantle, 5 Oct-14 Oct with 79 at 36.9S 26.3E on 5th, 40+ at 39.8S 45.5E on 7th, 26 including one dark phase at 40S 66E on 9th and 16 at 38.3S 85E on the 11th.

Capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*. Near the east coast of USA, DB reported two at 34.6N 74.7W and five at 35.9N 74.7W on 30 Nov. Vessel in Gulf Stream sea temp 28.4C.

Dark-rumped Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia*. In the eastern tropical Pacific DB saw two at 11.1S 101.5W, one at 10.6S 101.8W and 14 feeding at 9.7S 99.7W on 19 Nov. These birds were noted as being in heavy moult some with white patches on the back and one with whitish rump. The next day DB saw five at 7.3S 96.2W, one at 6.8S 95.4W and one at 5.8S 94W some 600 to 400 nm SW from the Galapagos Is. He also saw two at 2S 89W close south of the Galapagos Is on 21 Nov.

White-necked Petrel *Pterodroma cervicalis*. The small form of *cervicalis* which was been collected around northern Vanuatu and is thought to breed in the area, has now been proposed as a species, the **Vanuatu Petrel *Pterodroma occulta*** (Imber and Tennyson 2001). Compared with *cervicalis* it is smaller, has a relatively longer tail and the underwing has entirely dark grey exposed primaries. However, two out of 21 *cervicalis* examined by the authors had a similar underwing.

Juan Fernandez Petrel *Pterodroma externa*. Reported from the eastern South Pacific by DB, with five at 28.8S 134W on 13 Nov, one at 21.5S 118.1W on 16 Nov, five at 18.1S 112.3E, two at 17.6S 111.5E and nine at 16.8S 110.5E on 17 Nov, 34 feeding at 14.6S 106.8W, five at 14.1S 106W and six at 13S 104.4W on the 18 Nov.

Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii*/Pycroft's Petrel *Pterodroma pycrofti*. Small Gadfly Petrels identified as either of these species were seen east of NZ by DB with eight at 36.5S 176.8E, 34 at 36.5S 17.2E and 95 at 36.6S 179.1W on 8 Nov; 12 at 36.6S 174.9W and 16 at 35.8S 163.7W on 9 Nov.

Gould's Petrel *Pterodroma leucoptera*. Reported by DB from the Tasman Sea with two at 33.9S 163E and four at 35.1S 164.6E on 2 Nov.

Stejneger's Petrel *Pterodroma longirostris*. DB reported this species from the eastern tropical South Pacific with one at 17.6S 111.5W on 17 Nov, two at 14.1S 106W and three at 13S 104.4W the next day.

Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*. One seen by DB at 29.3N 15.6W off the Canaries on 24 Sept and another the next day at 21.1N 17.6W off-shore from Mauretania. Further south off Liberia, GL saw one at 4.2N 8.6W on 10 Nov.

SHEARWATERS *PROCELLARIINAE*

Grey Petrel *Procellaria cinerea*. Between Capetown and Fremantle seen by DB from 39.8S 84.6E to 37.3S 97.7E 11/12 Oct with maximum count of 12 at 38.3S 85E. He also recorded the species in small numbers each day in the South Pacific (9 Nov to 15 Nov) from 36.6S 174.9W to 22S 123W with a maximum of 15 at 27S 129.5W on 14th.

White-chinned Petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*. Many records from normal range 25-40S in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific. More notable records included:- Brazilian waters, one at 23.8S 42.9W on 4 Feb, one at 26.8S 46.4W and 13 at 27.3S 46.7W(DS). South Indian Ocean 148 in 5 hours at 36.9S 26.8E on 5 Oct, 109 in 2.75 hours at 39.8S 45.5E on 7 Oct and 54 in 2.5 hours at 39.5S 78.2E(DB).

Parkinson's Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni*. One reported east of NZ at 36.6S 179.1W on 8 Nov (DB).

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*. In the North Atlantic area GL saw three on 19 Mar at 27.2N 15.6W near the Canaries. Heading south at the end of Sep, DB saw them throughout the day in this area with a maximum count of 76 in 1.5h at 29.9N 15.4W on 24th, one at 19N 17.7W off Mauretania on 25th and four singles at 14N 17.8W off Senegal on 26th. GL saw one at 28N 13.9W on 25 Oct, 150+ at 23.5N 16.6W off southern Morocco on 26 Oct and 20+ at 22.9N 17W the same day. He also saw four at 35.9N 74.7W off east coast of USA on 30 Nov. RW counted 82 from 3-8 Aug at 51N 12W 59 nm SW from Ireland. South Atlantic records included six at 34.5S 14.5E SW from Cape Town on 8 Jan 02, 25+ at 27.1S 46.2W on 2 Mar 02 (GL). There were sightings by DS near Brazil in Feb with one at 23.8S 42.9W on 4th, one at 26S 44.8W and 15 at 26.3S 45.1W on 5th and four at 27.3S 46.6W on the 6th.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. Reported from the Tasman Sea by DB with 120 at 29S 156.5E, 79 at 29.7S 157.4E and 83 at 30.1S 158.8E approaching Lord Howe Island on 1 Nov. The next day he saw singles at 33.5S 162.3E and 33.9S 163E.

Buller's Shearwater *Puffinus bulleri*. Approaching NZ in the Tasman sea DB saw 61 in groups at 37.9S 169.5E and 12 at 38.8S 170.7E on 3 Nov. East of NZ he had 11 at 36.5S 176.8E and three at 36.5S 178.2E on 8 Nov. He also reported two birds out of season at 10.6S 101.8W in the eastern Pacific.

Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*. Two off Western Australia at 32.9S 112.4E on 14 Oct and 12 at 29.7S 157.4E and one at 30.1S 158.8E in Tasman sea on 1 Nov (DB).

Great Shearwater *Puffinus gravis*. Many records from the normal range in the North and South Atlantic. RW counted 39 from 3-8 Aug at 51N 12W 59 nm SW of Ireland. SC saw them flying north all day on 23 May counting 320, 26.6N 52.7W-25.1N 55.4W where he had an interesting sighting of a flock of 50 feeding on flying fish, some birds on the surface, others shallow diving and some flying taking flying fish in the air. Near the coast of Brazil, DS saw one at 23.1S 42.1W and one at 23.8S 42.9W on 4 Feb 02.

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus*. Near the coast of Peru from 8.5S 79.9W-9.6S 79.1W, 10 000+ many rafting on 10 Jun and 'hundreds' the following day at 12S 77.2W (SC). At 60N 7W between 22 and 31 Jul, 16 counted and four seen at 51N 12W 59 nm SW Ireland from 3-8 Aug (RW). DB provided a series of records from NZ across the South Pacific during Nov with two at 36.5S 178.2E and two at 36.6S 179.1E on 8th, eight at 36.6S 174.9W and five at 36.6S 174.1W on 9th, one at 36.2S 165.8W on 9th(E), one at 31.2S 140.9W on 12th, one at 14.6S 106.8W on 18th, eight at 11.1S 101.5W and four at 9.7S 99.7W on 19th, one at 7.3S 96.2W on 20th.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus tenuirostris*. DB encountered them flying south on passage in the Tasman Sea, with one at 29.7S 157.4E on 1 Nov, 80 in groups at 33.9S 163E and 148 in groups at 35.1S 164.6E on 2 Nov.

Christmas Shearwater *Puffinus nativitatus*. DB reported six at 24.5S 124W and two at 22S 123W in the central South Pacific on 15 Nov.

Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*. Reported from the wintering area off Brazil with one at 20.8S 39.2W on 25 Jan, 15 at 21.9S 39.8W on 3 Jan and 10 the next day at 23.1S 42.1W (DS), 44 singly and in groups at 55.1N 5.1W in Falmouth Bay on 11 Jun, 400 in groups at 51.3N 7.9W SE from Kinsale on 12 Jun, 68 at 51.6N 8.4W on 8 Jul and 15 at 50N 5.3W on 9 Jul (JP). West from the Isle of man MKB saw five at 54.3N 4.9W and c.60 at 54.3N 4.8W on 26 Jun and 23 the next day at the same position. Further north, MKB encountered extensive rafts of Manx 1.5 nm SW from Islay on 23 Aug. DB saw one in the Channel at 50N 2.5W on 21 Sep, one at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep and three singles at 14N 17.8 near Senegal on 26 Sep. SW of Brittany, SH&DH saw five at 47.1N 5W on 23 Oct.

Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis*. One reported by DB near Brazil at 21.9S 39.9W on 3 Feb. In the Tasman Sea, DB saw four at 30.1S 158.8E and one at 33.9S 163E on 1 and 2 Nov. He also had a series of sightings during Nov in the SW Pacific well east of NZ with three at 36.6S 179.1W on 8th, one at 36.6S 174.9W on 9th(W), two at 36.2S 165.8W and seven at 35.8S 163.7W on 9th(E) and four at 35.4S 159.1W and four at 35.2S 158W on 10th.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus l'herminieri*. SC saw one at 14.3N 70.9W north of Venezuela on 28 May and saw 'hundreds rafting and flying' near the coast of Peru at 8.5S 79.9W-9.6S 79.1W on 10 Jun. DB recorded seven at 12.4N 78.8W north of Panama on 26 Nov and six off the east coast of USA at 35.9N 74.7W on 30 Nov.

DIVING-PETRELS PELECANOIDINAE

Georgian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*. SC saw 20 at 53.8S 37.8W near Bird Island S.Georgia on 1 Oct and the next day saw 20+ at 52.6S 45.8W west of S.Georgia which he thought were probably this species.

Common Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides urinatrix*. GL reported one at Edinburgh Anchorage Tristan da Cunha on 9 Jan 02. SC reported five from the Falklands at 51.8S 60.8W on 1 Sep. In the South Indian Ocean, DB reported one at 37.3S 97.7E on 12 Oct.

STORM-PETRELS HYDROBATIDAE

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanicus oceanites*. One or two daily from 3-8 Aug SW of Ireland in the area 51N 12W (RW). DB recorded 165, singles and groups in 2.2 hours at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep. SC described three seen at 14.3N 70.9W north of Venezuela, an area where they are not usually seen. Many other records from the equatorial and South Atlantic including 20+ at Stromness S. Georgia on 11 Feb 02 (GL) and 41 in groups at 29.4S 14.4E off SW Africa (DB).

Elliot's Storm-petrel *Oceanites gracilis*. Two seen on 20 Nov at 6.8S 95.4W about 500 nm SW of the Galapagos where they are numerous. (DB).

White-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta grallaria*. GL reported two at 36.1S 15.8W and one at 35.8S 16.8W west of Tristan da Cunha on 10 Jan 02 and one at 50.9S 55.1W east of the Falklands on 16 Jan 02. DB reported one at 5.1S 5.1W and one at 12.1S 0.1E in the tropical Atlantic on 29 and 30 Sep.

Black-bellied Storm-petrel *Fregetta tropica*. One reported at 36.9S 28.2W in the South Atlantic (GL). Small numbers most days in the South Indian Ocean 5-13 Oct 36.9S 26.3E-35S 106.7E with a concentration of 110+ counted in 3 hours at 37.3S 97.7E on 12th (DB). He also reported one feeding at 35.2S 158W in the South Pacific.

British Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*. RW counted 1000+ 22-31 Jul at 60N 7W between Hebrides and Faeroes and 100+ 3-8 Aug at 51N 12W, 59 miles SW from Ireland. On 11 June one at 50.1N 5.1W, 15 singles and in groups at 51.3N 7.9W SE of Ireland on 12 Jun and 14 singles around 51.6N 8.4W SE of Kinsale on 8 Jul (JP).

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. In the eastern Atlantic DB reported one at 21.1N 17.6W on 25 Sep. GL reported one at 26.8N 14.8W south of the Canaries on 25 Oct. one at 4.1N 8.4W and one at 4.8N 9.5W south of Liberia on 10 Nov. DB provided a series of reports from the eastern tropical Pacific with small numbers each day 18-20 Nov 14.6S 106.8W-5.8S 94W. Passing SE of the Galapagos he counted 94 at 3.1S 90.3W, 31 at 2.6S 89.7W and 53 at 2S 89W on 21 Nov. The next day he reported 11 at 0.7N 86.3W, 31 at 1.4N 85.7W and 29 at 2.4N 84.5W.

Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*. In the area 60N 7W, 22-31 Jul 100+ counted by RW. GL saw one at 4.2N 8.6W and two at 4.3N 9.5W south of Liberia on 10 Nov.

Markham's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma markhami*. In the tropical eastern Pacific DB saw several large dark storm-petrels and identified one at 14.6S 106.8W on 18 Nov, four at 11.1S 101.5W on 19 Nov and one at 1.4N 85.7W, all with full pale stripe to the carpal on the upper wing.

TROPIC BIRDS PHAETHONTIDAE

Red-billed Tropic Bird *Phaethon aethereus*. Single birds were seen south of the Galapagos at 3.1S 90.3W, 2.6S 89.7W and 2.5S 89W on 21 Nov (DB).

Red-tailed Tropic Bird *Phaethon rubricauda*. One seen approaching Lord Howe Island, Tasman Sea at 30.1S 158.8E on 1 Nov. A series of records from the eastern tropical Pacific with one imm at 18.1S 112.3E, adults at 17.6S 111.5W and 16.8S 110W on 17 Nov; two at 14.6S 106.8W, one at 13S 104.4W on 18 Nov and one adult at 10.6S 101.8E on 19 Nov. (DB).

White-tailed Tropic Bird *Phaethon lepturus*. DB described a bird seen at 0.8N 9.9W in the eastern tropical Atlantic. The bird had a yellow suffusion on the back and tail reminiscent of the Christmas Island race *fulvus*. Murphy (1936) mentions that adults of the Atlantic equatorial form '*ascensionis*' sometimes have a peach coloured and rarely an orange tint. It should be noted that M Le Corre & P Jouventin (Geographical variation in the White-tailed Tropic Bird *Phaethon lepturus* with the description of a new subspecies endemic to Europa Island, southern Mozambique Channel, *Ibis* 141: 233-239, 1999) have recently reported that while the peach-coloured morph is mainly found on Christmas and Europa Islands in the Indian Ocean, a few also occur widely everywhere else. He also saw an adult at 27.6N 74.6W and a sub-adult at 29.2N 74.6W NE of the Bahamas on 29 Nov.



White-tailed Tropic Bird brooding young (*Phaethon lepturus*), 4 Aug 1997, Cousin Island, Seychelles. Photo: Sam Alexander.

PELICANS PELICANIDAE

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*. SC saw c.100, mostly immatures when entering Cartagena Harbour, Colombia 29 May, and observed them throughout a Panama canal transit on 3 Jun. DB recorded 200 feeding at Balboa Anchorage, Panama on 24 Nov and saw 100+ feeding at Kingston, Jamaica on 27 Nov.

Peruvian Pelican *Pelecanus thagus*. Several records from SC including 300+ between 8.5S 79.9W and 9.6S 79.1W on 10 Jun, 100+ in Antofagasta Hbr. on 23 Jun, 10-15 per day at Caldera Bay, Chile (27S) from 30 Jun-3 Jul, 200+ at Coquimbo, Chile (30S), 100+ at Valparaiso 12-18 Jul and 30+ at 37.1S 73.9W on 20 Jul.

GANNETS AND BOOBIES SULIDAE

Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*. Large numbers recorded by SH&DH offshore from southern Cornwall with adults/imm 1380/44 at 49.9S 4.3W, 2400/39 at 49.7N 4.4W and 7500/73 at 49.6N 4.5W on 21 Oct. Two adults and 2 imm at 43.5N 9.7W off NW Spain on 22 Sep and 24 all immatures behind a trawler at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep (DB).

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis*. DB recorded 940 adults feeding at 33.8S 18.1E and 19 adults and four imm at 34.9S 19.1E near Cape Town on 4 Oct.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*. Seven described by SC at 1.1S 81.3W near the coast of Ecuador on 5 Jun.

Peruvian Booby *Sula variegata*. Small flocks totalling 500+ flying out to sea between 8.5S 79.9W and 9.6S 79.1W on 10 Jun, 15 at 12S 77.2W on 11 Jun and 10 in Callao Hbr the same day, one at 26S 71.1W on 22 Jun, 11 feeding at 23.6S 70.5W on 23 Jun and two at Valparaiso on 12 Jul (SC).

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. One north of Venezuela at 12.7N 73.1W on 28 May (SC). In the Atlantic five at 0.9S 29.6W on 13 Mar 02 (GL), widespread single birds off shore from Brazil 3 Feb 02-6 Feb 02 20.8S-27.2S 39.2W-48.4W (DS), one adult at 20.6S 39.2W on 21 Oct and 2 adults at 4.6S 36.1W on 24 Oct (SC). In the eastern tropical Pacific SC saw one at 1.1S 81.3W near Ecuador on 5 Jun and DB had a series of sightings in Nov with one sub-ad at 11.1S 101.5W, one adult and four sub-ad at 10.6S 101.8W, one adult with two sub-ad at 9.7S 99.7W on 19th, four at 3.6S 91W, three at 3S 90.3W, two at 2.6S 89.7W, two at 2S 89W all adults on 21st and four adults at 5.5N 81.6W SW of Panama on 23rd. (Pitman & Jehl (1998) now treat the sub-species breeding at the Galapagos as a full species the **Nazca Booby** *Sula granti*. The adult has a orange bill and orange eye and the immature usually lacks the white cervical collar.)

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*. SC saw 10 when entering Rio de Janeiro Hbr on 15 Oct. DB recorded 10 adults and imm at Balboa, Panama on 24 Nov, three imm at 17.8N 77W near Jamaica on 27 Nov and an adult at 22.1N 74.4W in the southern Bahamas on 28 Nov.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. One white-tailed brown morph catching flying fish 'on the wing' off Venezuela at 12.7N 73.1W on 28 May (SC). In the eastern Pacific four imm at 0.7N 86.3W on 22 Nov and an adult and imm near Cuba at 20N 74W on 28 Nov (DB).

CORMORANTS *PHALACROCORACIDAE*



Mixed colony of Imperial Shags (*Leucocarbo atriceps*) and Rockhopper Penguins (*Eudyptes chrysocome*) 28 Nov 1996, Pebble Island, Falkland Islands.

Photo: Sam Alexander

Olivaceous Cormorant *Phalacrocorax brasiliensis*. SC counted 21 when entering Cartagena Harbour, Colombia on 29 May and had 330 in flocks on the estuary passage to Guayaquil, Ecuador on 6 Jun. SC also saw 40 roosting on harbour cranes at Antofagasta, Chile on 23 Jun. DS reported the species abundant in Rio de Janeiro Harbour during Feb 02.

Imperial Shag *Leucocarbo atriceps*. Several reports from the Falklands and S.Georgia; GL saw 'large numbers' at East Cove entrance on 17 Jan 02 and 25+ at 51.2S 59.2W on 28 Jan. SC described one seen at 51.8S 60.8W on 1 Sep, recorded 50+ when departing from East Cove on 25 Sep and saw 10 north of Cumberland Bay S.Georgia on 29 Sep.

Guanay Shag *Leucocarbo bougainvillii*. SC saw five at 8.5S 79.9W off Peru on 10 Jun, one at Caldera Bay Chile (27S) on 30 Jun and saw 20-30 each day 7-9 Jun at Coquimbo Bay Chile (30S).

Cape Shag *Leucocarbo capensis*. DB recorded 14 off Cape Town at 35.9S 19.1E on 4 Oct.

Red-legged Shag *Stictocarbo gaimardi*. SC saw one at 23.4S 770.3W off Chile on 23 Jun. He also recorded 100+ adults and imm each day at Coquimbo Bay, Chile(30S), 7-9 Jun and saw 20+ each day at Valparaiso (33S) from 12-18 Jul.

Rock Shag *Stictocarbo magellanicus*. Around the Falklands SC recorded 20+ each day in Mare Harbour 26 Jul-3 Aug, six at 51.4S 61W on 31 Aug, 30+ at 51.9S 58.1W on 20 Sep and had 100+ leaving East Cove on 25 Sep.

FRIGATEBIRDS FREGATIDAE

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. SC saw one off Venezuela at 12.7N 73.1W on 25 May and had four or five each day in Cartegena Harbour, Colombia from 29 May to 2 June. On 6 Jun whilst on passage up the Guayas estuary to Guayaquil, Ecuador he counted 2000+ fishing and roosting in the mangroves. Entering Rio de Janeiro on 15 Oct, SC counted 20+. DB saw 300+ at Balboa Anchorage, Panama on 24 Nov, eight at 17.8N 77W approaching Jamaica on 27 Nov and 70 fishing in Kingston Harbour later the same day.

PHALAROPES PHALAROPODIDAE

Red Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*. SH&DH reported single birds off Brittany at 47.6N 5.1W, 48.5N 5.2W and 49.2N 4.8W on 23 Oct.

Phalarope Sp. Heading south off West Africa during Sep, DB saw seven at 21.1N 17.6 on 25th, 11 flying south at 14N 17.8W on 26th, 11 at 7.2N 14.7W on 27th and nine at 0.9N 9.9W on 28th.

SHEATHBILLS CHIONIDIDAE



American or Snowy Sheathbill (*Chionis alba*), 29 Nov 1996, Falkland Islands.

Photo: Sam Alexander

Yellow-billed Sheathbill *Chionis alba*. SC recorded two or three each day scavenging at Marc Harbour, Falklands from 26 Jul to 3 Aug.

SKUAS AND JAEGERS *STERCORARIINI*

Great Skua *Catharacta skua*. JP recorded one at 51.6N 8.4W, SE from Kinsale on 8 Jul. DB had one at 52.5N 3.1E near the Dutch coast on 16 Sep and 14 singly and in groups at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep. GL recorded one at 23.5N 16.6W SW of Morocco on 26 Oct. SH&DH counted large numbers south of Cornwall with 16 at 49.9N 4.3W, 26 at 49.7N 4.6W and 76 at 49.6N 4.5W on 21 Oct.

Southern Skua *Catharacta (s) antarctica*. At the Falklands GL saw two at East Cove on 17 Jan 02 and 10 at 51.2S 59.2W on 28 Jan 02. SC saw two at 53.9S 37.8W near Bird Island S. Georgia on 1 Oct. He also reported 10 large all dark skuas off the coast of Peru between 8.5S 79.9W and 9.6S 79W on 10 Jun which were probably this species or the Chilean Skua *C.s.chilensis*. He also made a similar observation of eight birds off Chile at 23.4S 70.3W on 26 Jun. DB saw one off Cape Town at 34.9S 19.1E on 4 Oct.



Adult Antarctic Skua (*Catharacta antarctica*), 28 Nov 1996, Pebble Island, Falkland Islands. *Photo:* Sam Alexander.

South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*. One reported without details by DS at 26.7S 45.9W off Brazil on 5 Feb 02. SC reported four (one dark the others pale/intermediates) between 14.3N 70.9W and 13.9N 71.3W north of Venezuela on 28 May.

Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*. DS reported single birds off Brazil at 22S 39.8W on 3 Feb 02 and at 27S 48.4W and 27.2S 47W on 6 Feb 02. RW saw five second and third summer birds between Hebrides and Faroes around 60N 7W from 22-31 Jul. A number of records during the Autumn passage on the eastern side of the Atlantic including 12 seen by DB singly and in groups (two with full tails) at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sept and five (two showing full tails) seen by GL at 23.5N 16.6W on 26 Oct. DB counted 16 in 2.5 hours at 35.1S 164.6E in the Tasman sea on 2 Nov. He also had records from the eastern equatorial Pacific with one at 18.1S 112.3W on 17 Nov, two at 13S 104.4W on 18 Nov, one at 10.6S 101.7W on 19 Nov and one at 6.8S 95.4W the next day.

Arctic Skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*. RW saw three in the area around 51N 12W SW of Ireland from 3-8 Aug. A number of records during the Autumn passage in the eastern Atlantic including DB who saw 11 singles at 21.1 n 17.6 W on 25 Sept and five flying south off Sierra Leone at 5.7N 13.5W on 27 Sept. DB also saw four at 34.9S 19.1E off Cape Town on 4 Oct and two in South Indian Ocean at 35.9S 103.5E on 13 Oct and one off Western Australia at 31.7S 114.8E on 14 Oct. He also recorded one attacking a Juan Fernandez Petrel (*Pterodroma externa*) at 16.8S 110W in the eastern Pacific on 17 Nov and two dark morph birds at 35.9N 74.6W off east coast of USA on 30 Nov.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus*. GL reported a single bird at 22.5N 17.1W off SW Morocco on 26 Oct.

GULLS *LARIDAE*

Grey Gull *Larus modestus*. One seen by SC at Caldera Bay, Chile (27S) on 30 Jun.

Belcher's Gull *Larus belcheri*. SC saw one at 12S 77.2W on 11 Jun and 20 later the same day in Callao Harbour Peru (12S). He went on to see 20+ adults and imm at Antofagasta, Chile (24S) on 23 Jun and recorded one or two each day 30 Jun-3 Jul at Caldera Bay (27S).

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*. One juvenile reported from 33.8S 7.9W off Morocco (GL)



Audouin's Gull (*Larus audouinii*) and Lesser Black-backed Gull (*Larus (f) fuscus*).
6 Nov 2001, Tamri, Morocco. Photo: Sam Alexander.

Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*. Entering Santander Harbour SH&DH reported 10 adults on 22 Oct. DB saw an adult and imm. probably *gracilis*, at 34.7N 13.5W NW of Morocco on 23 Sep.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*. SC reported 30 off Punta Delgado, Azores on 19 May.

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*. Entering Santander Hbr, SH&DH counted 750+ Herring and Yellow-legged Gulls on 22 Oct. DB saw 39 adults and three imm at 35.9N 74.7W off east coast USA on 30 Nov.

Great Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus*. SH&DH counted 89 adults and 34 imm in 0.5h at 49.7N 4.4W SE of the Lizard on 21 Oct. 25 adult and 177 imm at 49.6N 4.5W the same day. JP saw 18 adults and imm at 50N 1.4W NNE from Cherbourg on 11 May.

Kelp Gull *Larus dominicanus*. During June SC saw one at Callao Hbr, Peru (12S) on the 11th, c.40 at Valparaiso (33S) on the 18th, 4 adults at Antofagasta on the 23rd and c.20 each day at Caldera bay Chile from the 30th Jun to 3rd Jul. He reported them as 'numerous' at Mare Hbr, Falklands from 26th Jul until 3rd Aug and 'large numbers' from the same area on 17 Jan 02. GL saw 20+ including a first year bird at Cumberland Bay, S.Georgia on 10 Feb 02. DB saw seven adults at 33.8S 18.1E off Cape Town on 4 Oct.



Adult Kelp or Dominican Gull (*Larus dominicanus*) in breeding plumage.
Photo: Sam Alexander.

Dolphin Gull *Larus scoresbii*. Six to ten each day in Mare Harbour, Falklands from 26 Jul to 3 Aug. (SC).

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*. DB saw 2 adults at 5.5N 81.6W and an adult + imm at 5.8N 81.4W SW from Panama on 23 Nov. He also recorded three adults at Balboa Anchorage Panama on 25 Nov, 300+ in Kingston Hbr, Jamaica on 27 Nov and six adults at 35.9N 74.7W off east coast USA on 30 Nov.

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*. DB reported an immature from the eastern tropical Pacific at 2.4N 84.5W on 22 Nov and six adults at 35.9N 74.7W on 30 Nov.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*. SH&DH saw eight adults when entering Santander Hbr on 22 Oct.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*. In the wintering area off South Africa, GL reported two adults at 34.3S 18.6E on 4 Jan 02 and DB saw one adult nearby at 33.8S 18.1E on 4 Oct. DB also recorded 10 Adults and two juveniles in singles and groups on passage at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep.

Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrus furcatus*. DB reported one adult on 21 Nov at 2S 89W about 40 miles SE of the Galapagos where they breed.

Black-legged Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. The usual records from the western approaches and Bay of Biscay. GL saw a 1st winter bird at 22.9N 17W off SW Morocco on 26 Oct. DB saw two adults near the northern Dutch coast at 53N 4.6E on 16 Sep and two 1st year birds at 36.3N 74.7W off the east coast of the USA on 30 Nov.

TERNS STERNIDAE

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*. DB reported two fishing with Black Terns at 14N 17.8W off Senegal on 26 Sep. GL saw one at 4.5N 9.5W south of Liberia on 10 Nov.

Black Tern *Chlidonias nigra*. DB saw 33 in groups at 14N 17.8W off Senegal and three further south at 12N 17.8W on 26 Sep. GL saw four in non-breeding plumage at 4.2N 8.6W and one at 4.5N 9.5W south of Liberia on 10 Nov.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*. One in breeding plumage at 7.2N 14.7W off Sierra Leone on 27 Sep (DB).

South American Tern *Sterna hirundinacea*. In the Falklands area GL saw seven at East Cove on 17 Jan 02 and two at 51.9S 58.3W on 7 Feb 02.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. SC saw five near Punta Delgado, Azores on 19 May. DB reported three adults and one juvenile at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*. JP saw eight adults in the Solent off Totland Bay on 14 May and SH&DH saw one in the southern Bay of Biscay at 44.2N 4.2W on 22 Oct.

Antarctic Tern *Sterna vittata*. Around S.Georgia, SC saw two just north of Cumberland Bay on 29 Sept, five pairs at Grytviken Bay on 29/30 Sep and six at 54S 36.8W on 1 Oct. GL saw one at Cumberland Bay on 10 Feb 02 and three the next day at Stromness. He also saw 10 at Edinburgh Anchorage, Tristan da Cuhna on 9 Jan 02.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. DB had 70 probably of this species in groups at 1.2N 10.1W in the equatorial Atlantic on 28 Sep.

Sooty Tern *Sterna fuscata*. DB reported 12 in the Atlantic at 0.1S 9.1W and in the Tasman Sea near Lord Howe Island where they breed in the southern Spring and Summer, two at 29S 156.5E, two at 29.7S 157.4E and 76 singles and groups at 30.1S 158.8E on 1 Nov.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. DB saw one at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep.

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*. GL saw a flock of 100+ about 20 nm south of Cape of Good Hope at 34.4S 18.2E on 3 Jan 02.

Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*. SC saw one adult in Cartagena Hbr, Columbia on 2 Jun, and two at Gatun Lake, Panama the following day. DB observed one adult at 21.1N 17.6W off Mauretania on 25 Sep. He also saw eight adults and an imm at Balboa Anchorage, Panama on 24 Nov, 10 at the northern entrance to the Canal the next day, five at 17.8N 77W approaching Jamaica on 27 Nov and 50+ in Kingston Harbour later that day.

Sandwich Tern *Sterna sandvicensis*. JP observed 10 in groups at 50N 1.4W NNE from Cherbourg on 11 May and DB saw 10 near the northern Dutch coast at 53.6N 6E on 16 Sep. DB also saw 20 in groups at 5.7N 13.5W off Liberia on 27 Sep and one at 0.9N 9.4W the next day. In the Caribbean DB saw three at the northern entrance to the Panama canal on 25 Nov, 30 at 17.8N 77W near Jamaica and 200+ in Kingston Harbour on 27 Nov.

Inca Tern *Larosterna inca*. Six were seen by SC in Callao Harbour, Peru on 11 Jun and three at 23.4S 70.3W on 23 Jun.

White Tern *Gygis alba*. In the eastern South Pacific c.230nm S Pitcairn Island, DB saw two at 27.4S 130.3W, three at 27S 129.5W, three at 26.3S 127.8W on 14 Nov. The next day he saw three at 24.5S 124W and one at 22S 123W, on 17 Nov one at 17.6S 111.5W and on 22 Nov one at 2.4N 84.5W.

AUKS ALCIDAE

Razorbill *Alea torda*. JP saw eight at 50N 1.4W north of Cherbourg on 11 May and three at 50.5N 1.7W on 14 May.

Guillemot *Uria aalge*. JP saw six at 50N 1.4W on 11 May and two at 50.5N 1.7W on 14 May. SH&DH observed six at 49.2N 4.8W off Brittany on 23 Oct.

Puffin *Fratercula arctica*. SH&DH observed four singles between 48.5N 5.2W and 49.2N 4.8W off Brittany on 23 Oct.

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Adult Sooty Gull (*Larus hemprichii*) near Hurghada, Egypt, 31 Mar 2000.
Photo: Sam Alexander.

COAST TO COAST IN COSTA RICA

by Stan Howe



Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificans*), Galapagos, April 2001.

Photo: Captain NG Cheshire MN.

The Great Game in Central America in the mid-19th Century was to promote a ship canal from Atlantic to Pacific, with Britain and the United States the major players. To this end Britain even set up satraps along the Mesquite Coast of Nicaragua, and to encourage their allegiance the native kings were ceremonially crowned in the Anglican Cathedral at Belize. Our favoured routing would have been up the San Juan River into Lake Nicaragua, and then via a canal cut through to the nearby Pacific Ocean. In the event the USA and its Panama Canal, less than one-third the ocean-to-ocean length and but a day's voyage further south, won the day. Britain was placated with treaty rights of passage, and the puppet kingdoms were 'forgotten'.

This romantic, if crude, representation of history became my excuse for exploring northern Costa Rica (just a few miles south of the afore-mentioned traverse) for its birdlife in February 2002. Birdwatchers after all require little self-justification to indulge their fancy.

From Costa Rica's major port on the Caribbean coast, Puerto Limon, one travels by launch north through the jungle via a network of rivers and canals developed by an earlier generation of loggers. These waterways are but a stone's throw from the briny, separated from it by a narrow strip of vegetated sand famous as a major nesting site for the Green Turtle. Destination Tortuguero, a village and Environmental Research Station, on the sand spit near where it is breached allowing a branch of the San Juan River to enter the sea. Seabirds overall were scarce but, at this opening to the sea, lots of Royal Terns chose to sit on any convenient float/boat, punctuated by the odd Brown Pelican. Mainly though those big birds were out trawling the turbulent beach in long lines astern of up to 30, occasionally plunge diving despite notices warning of rip tides, shark and barracuda. Nor did the many Olivaceous Cormorant swimming around seem to pay much heed to the American Crocodiles and Caiman that infest the inner

waters. What luck to be human and only have to contend with jiggers and mosquitoes!

Excursions from my lodgings in Tortuguero up the rivers and creeks yielded many species of wet lowland forest bird including five of the six kingfishers on the Costa Rican list, a Sungrebe, an Osprey and a Great Curassow. Of course Anhinga were hanging out to dry everywhere, and Magnificent Frigatebirds high overhead kept in one's mind the fact that the ocean was never far away. And paradoxically the plantain plantation dock whence I left this habitat for drier land was my only sighting of House Sparrow in Costa Rica, and that before any sundowners.

In tracking west my next wetlands experience was on the River Frio, a tributary of the San Juan and close to the Nicaraguan border, in mid-isthmus. A couple of hours by boat north could have taken me to San Carlos on Lake Nicaragua, but the more politic option in Los Chiles is a trip of similar duration in the opposite direction to Cano Negro. Round the first bend one encounters hundreds of Wood Stork, White Ibis, Roseate Spoonbill, Northern Jacana, Black-necked Stilt and assorted herons standing jam-packed like a Cup Final crowd of yore on a spit of mud a quarter of the size of Wembley's pitch. One can but muse on what Los Chiles provides to attract such support. On up towards the lagoon I spot Crested Guan, Grey-necked Wood-rail, a Great Potoo and the sixth of the resident kingfishers (American Pygmy); not ignoring the still sinister stirring of crocodilians now joined by otters and river turtles and iguanas in a range of size and colour. Meanwhile monkey tribes of three kinds vie with 2-toed and 3-toed sloth and Proboscis Bat for tree space. For the committed naturalist the advice must be, do not blink or you will miss something. Vultures, kites and hawks make one blasé of raptors, till by the roadside on the way back to a night at the foot of the active Arenal Volcano we meet Crested Caracara feasting on a rotten orange. It only flits up sufficiently to expose striking black and white wings and white rump in a token gesture of fright at being observed.

The sizeable Arenal Lake sits astride the Continental Divide, set in a low col its natural bent is to outflow its water to the Caribbean, heaping Pelion upon Ossa (the equivalent of coals to New-Cassell afore the railway come!). The wily Ticos have other ideas; they have dammed the eastern end and made it disgorge towards the more and western plain, where it is used to irrigate rice paddy and cotton fields before escaping via the Tempisque River and the Gulf of Nicoya into the Pacific. I found it too big and the shores too bustling to attract; tourists feeding a family of solicitous coatimundi on the roadway put it in the theme park league. Instead I put up on the very ridge of the cordillera near the smaller Lago de Cote. It was beautiful walking country with a mild climate, but the best birding was got by just sitting at the bird feeder outside the hotel diner. Tanagers, orioles, thrushes, warblers, pigeons, parrots and finches abounded. The only new waterbird turned up on the lake was a Common Gallinule (Moorhen to you and me). Its shores in compensation had splendid close up views of the delightful Grey Hawk though.

Across Arenal Lake the cordillera was higher and its peaks seemed lost in perpetual mist. Here was the true watershed for my trip. In the Monteverde Cloud Forest one is promised that 'once in a lifetime experience' of seeing something quite remarkable, the sales pitch that never quite lives up. I had already been up to the crater of Poas at 9000' in the outskirts of Costa Rica's capital, San Jose. There one could not see the near edge of the crater at 10', let alone the other side at 1.5 miles range nor the lake inside, for mist. Fat chance then of a Resplendent Quetzal. Eat my hat! In three days I had excellent sightings of both sexes; flying, feeding, preening, and even saw their nest site - a hole 8m up in a dead stump in the primary forest on the Pacific side of the ridge. And all under a cloudless blue sky, with the mist held up on the wetter Atlantic side of the ridge. The males fantastic tail streamers (coverts actually), the magical blue-green

of the upper plumage and the blood red chest and belly above a pure white under-tail are mind blowing. The legend of it using it's breast to stem the flow of blood from the Aztec king martyred by the conquistadors becomes believable. After this a dozen different species of humming-bird at the lodge feeders, and numerous other trogons in the forest were but gilt on the gingerbread.

From this lofty peak, like stout Cortez in Darien, one looks down on the full length of the Gulf of Nicoya - an inlet of the Pacific Ocean. It stretches, with its myriads of scattered islands, from the one-time chief port, of Puntarenas at its mouth up to the Tempisque River and the Palo Verde Nature Reserve at its head. My aim was to cross the Gulf near the head and carry on over dirt roads to the open Pacific near Villareal, where a Marine Nature Reserve has been established to protect the Leatherback Turtle nesting sites along the shore by Playa Tamarindo.

Arriving at the dock there was a surprise in that a structure akin to the Forth Road Bridge is nearing completion. It will soon make the ferry to Puerto Moreno redundant, and put the plethora of immature Laughing Gulls that track it out of countenance. However a launch trip up the Tempisque River into the Palo Verde Reserve from there, will still be worth the ride. Crossing a sandbar on the rising tide one was back in crocodile and mangrove territory with hosts of Wood Stork, Roseate Spoonbills and Olivaceous Cormorant again the major avian players, although waders like Killdeer, Spotted Sandpiper and Whimbrel are not unnoticed. And yet further into the reserve there is a RAMSAR wetland site that beat anything so far for density of birdlife. Black-bellied Whistling Duck and Blue-winged Teal fill the gaps left between yet more of the bigger species already mentioned, along with all manner of heron/egret. These have all benefited from the redirection of some of Lake Arenal's water, feeding as they do in the paddy fields around.

Pushing on to the Pacific coast the landscape is distinctly more arid, leading birds to seek out shade during the heat of the day. Double-striped Thick-knee loaf around in pasture burnt brown, but hardly moving from beneath the biggest trees. A range of parrots, woodpeckers, and trogons stay on branches in deep foliage. Variegated Squirrels and monkeys join them. Only the gaudy and rowdy Scarlet Macaws near the beach hotels in Playa Tamarindo seem to relish the sun. But it is by the light of the moon that the lasting impression of the Pacific Coast is made. At midnight comes the news that one of the last Leatherback Turtles of the season is about to start digging a huge pit on the beach, above the tideline, in which to lay its 60+ eggs. A protracted job that needs to be all done and covered over before dawn breaks.

Way out southwest some 300 miles across Pink-footed Shearwater seas, with potential for Wedge-rumped and Black Storm-petrels and Red-billed Tropicbird, lay the last piece of Costa Rica, Cocos Island (5:32N+87:05W), half way to the Galapagos Islands in the same direction. Hopeful yet hopeless enquiries were made as to how one might reach it but only snorkellers on week-long charters seem to attract local boatmen these days. Thus I was left to imagine where the Great Frigatebirds nest along with Red-footed Booby, Black Noddy and White Tern on an island with its own endemic Cuckoo, Flycatcher and Finch. Maybe we will read of these in more detail from the next mariner heading north after passing through that canal whose potted history I began with.

**Alma House,
Torphins**

21 June 2002.

[A version has appeared in a NSBC Newsletter]

Birds Reported in *Sea Swallow* from vicinity of Cocos Island (Costa Rica)

11/1956

0095730 Cocos Island (Mitchell (JBM), *MV Beaverbank*)

Peregrine Falcon, 1. SS10:20 & SS15:34-35 Came aboard and stayed for 8 days (2500ml) Fed daily on Storm-petrel sp (eight sorties per day) but ultimately may have died of thirst [ssp anatum - Duck Hawk. Mainly takes aquatic birds]

03/01/1963

00958 Off Cocos I.I.T (Morris (NM), *HMY Britannia*)

Leach's Storm-petrel, 2. SS17:27

15/12/1978

00957* Off Cocos I.I.T (Weitkowitz (WW), *MV Columbus California*)

Common White Tern. SS30:65 [Date+ coords omitted] Predictably seen close to Cocos I.

Editor's comment - Numbers refer to Bird Recorder identification reference within the *Sea Swallow* database held by Stan Howe.



Great Frigatebird (*Fregata minor*) juvenile, 8 Apr 2001, Genovesa Is. Galapagos.
Photo: N Cheshire.

A NORTH-BOUND TRANSIT OF THE SUEZ CANAL IN MARCH 2002

by Captain MK Barritt Royal Navy

Since the Suez Canal was closed throughout my periods of sea service in eastern waters, I jumped at the opportunity to join *HMS Scott* for a N-bound transit on 29 March 2002. In preparation I read Captain Gerald Tuck's *A Guide to Seabirds on the Ocean Routes*, noting in particular his comments on the impact of the October War on the environment along the canal.

I joined the ship at her anchorage in Suez Bay, from which we weighed in the Morning Watch of Good Friday. During the ensuing day we made a dramatic climatic transition, which tested my companions after their Indian Ocean deployment. Daybreak brought a keen land breeze under a clear sky, with warmth in the lee by late forenoon. By the time we reached the Port Said by-pass we began to feel the impact of a severe depression which I had observed tracking across the Mediterranean during my out-bound flight. We emerged into a rough sea and strong north-westerly wind.

Although a passenger, I had a programme of meetings, briefings and walk-rounds which took me away from the bridge. Nonetheless I achieved a sufficiently balanced lookout to build up a sketch of distribution along the Canal. I looked in vain for the flamingos which Captain Tuck mentions as present before 1973. However, there were encouraging signs of gathering grounds for waders on the areas on the margins of the canal which are charted as liable to flooding. Particularly large gatherings of waders were visible on the mud-banks between the two shipping channels in Lake Timsah.

The following table of observations appears broadly consistent with the indications of distribution in the references. Some prior study would have sharpened up some of my observations. One comment seems worthy of high-lighting. Carrion Crows (*Corvus corone*) were seen throughout my land journey from Cairo to Port Suez, one of the species embarked as *HMS Scott* entered the canal, and numerous others were seen all the way to Ismailia. From Ismailia northwards they were entirely displaced by the Hooded Crow (*C. c. pallidus*).

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Time	Position	Species	Comment
0550	29° 55'N 32° 33'E	1 P Lesser Black-backed Gull (<i>Larus fuscus</i>) (Juv, X)	In the Eastern Channel.
0605	29° 58'N 32° 35'E	1 P Carrion Crow (<i>Corvus corone</i>) (X and onboard)	Others of the same species were seen as we entered the canal. One flight of duck or waders was sighted in the far distance just outside the canal entrance.
0630	29° 59'.7 N 32° 35' E	1 P Herring Gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>) (X)	
0640	30° 01'N 32° 34'.9E	1 P Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>) (X)	
0645		1 U Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>) (Female, W)	A small duck with conspicuous white around the eye, mainly dark upper-parts and lighter underparts.
0650		1 P Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	White with black eye (and possibly a stripe), black legs and yellow feet.
0705		4 U Spur-winged Plover (<i>Hoplopterus spinosus</i>) (X)	Also distant sighting of egrets in a green plantation on the W bank.
0710		2 P Spur-winged Plover	On the E bank. A fox was sighted on the W bank in the same reach.
0735	30° 08'.2 N 32° 34'.25 E	6 P Common Tern (X, G)	
0740	30° 08'.7 N 32° 34'.25 E	2 P Spur-winged Plover	On the bank of the canal.
0753	30° 10'.7 N 32° 34'.1 E	C50 U Little Egret (G, W)	In a lagoon on the W bank.
0800	30° 12'.3 N 32° 33'.8 E	Cl 2 P Little Tern (<i>Sterna albifrons</i>) (X,G)	In the final leg leading to the Little Bitter Lake, where the species was numerous. Size was distinctive. Significant fishing activity was observed in the Little Bitter Lake. No birds were recorded in the Great Bitter Lakes.
1033	30° 25'N 32° 21'.5 E	2 P Common Terns (X)	In the Deversoir By-pass.

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Cl 100		5 P Spur-winged Plover 1 P Ringed Plover (<i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>)	A variety of waders was observed on either shore, at a distance which made identification difficult from a moving vessel. Some behaved like sandpipers. The distinctive tail marking of the Ringed Plover was visible and was sketched.
1133	30° 33' N 32° 18'.5 E	Num Common Tern (X) 1 Marsh Tern (<i>Chlidonias</i>)	Flocks of small waders were seen on the flooded land E of the cut approaching Lake Timsah. Of the very large numbers on the mud on the banks between the channels in the lake, only a few Spur-winged Plover were identifiable at distance.
1335	30° 50' N 32° 19' E	Num Common Tern (X) 1U Bee Eater (<i>M. orientalis cleopatra</i>)	The <i>Merops</i> identification is very tentative since insufficient notes were achieved at the time. But I have no recollection of strong yellow around face or mantle. Also I did not immediately recognise what I was seeing, despite having observed <i>M. apiaster</i> elsewhere.
1347		4 Little Egret 1 U Kestrel (<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>) (X) 6 U Sand Martins <i>Riparia riparia</i> X)	The martins followed the ship throughout this stretch, hawking around the stern.
1420	30° 58'.25 N 32° 18'.8 E	Num P Herring Gulls (X)	Sighted throughout the next leg.
1503	31° 04' N 32° 18'.5 E	1 U Merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>) (I, X)	Yellow face. Mottled wings and upper tail.
1555	31° 10' N 32° 19'.75 E	Num U Slender-billed Gulls (<i>Larus genei</i>) (X) 1 P Little Tern	In the final cut. The gulls had black bills, and black on the underside of the outer primaries. The mantle was grey. However, they seemed distinctively and uniformly pale.
1625	31° 15' E 32° 21' E	Num Lesser Black-backed Gull (A and 1, X in wake) Num Little Tern (X)	In the exit channel from the canal.

Captain MK Barritt Royal Navy, No 2 The Terrace, Morice Yard, HM Naval Base Devonport



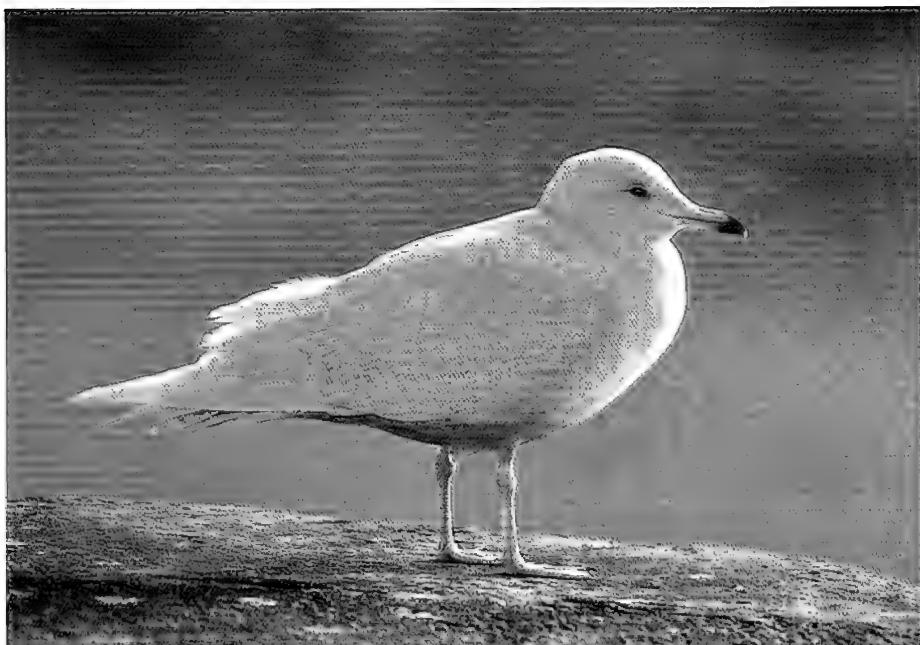
Ring-billed Gull (*Larus delawarensis*). 10 Sept 1996, Nehalem Sewage Lagoons, Oregon USA. Photo: Sam Alexander.



Adult Great Black-backed Gull (*Larus (f.) fuscus*) in breeding plumage, 12 Dec 2001,
Newburgh. *Photo:* Sam Alexander.



Glaucous Gull (*Larus hyperboreus*), 15 Nov 2001, Kinnaird Head, Fraserburgh.
Photo: Sam Alexander.

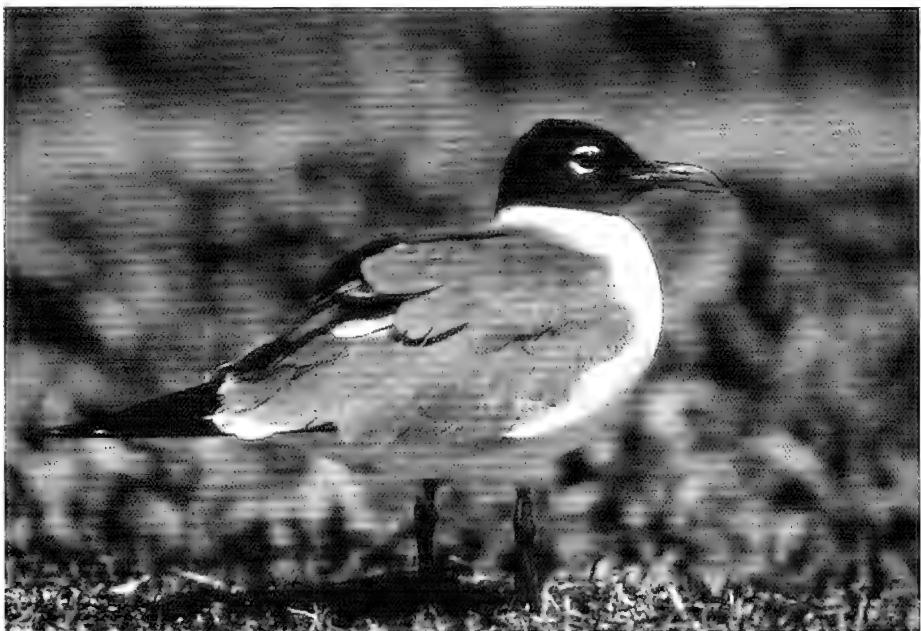


Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucopterus*). 12 Mar 2002, Fraserburgh. Photo: Sam Alexander.



Adult Yellow-legged Gull (*Larus cachinnans*) 6 Nov 2001, Agadir, Morocco.
Photo: Sam Alexander.

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Adult Laughing Gull (*Larus atricilla*) in breeding plumage, 27 Apr 2002,
Key West, Florida, USA. Photo: Sam Alexander.



Adult Red-legged Kittiwakes (*Rissa brevirostris*), 12 Jun 2001,
St Paul Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska, USA. Photo: Sam Alexander.



Black Skimmers (*Rynchops nigra*) 17Apr 2002, Lake Okee Chobee, Florida, USA.
Photo: Sam Alexander.



Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*) colony, 9 Aug 1997.
Seychelles. Photo: Sam Alexander.

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Adult Least Tern (*Sterna antillarum*) 16 Apr 2002, Wakodahatchee, Wetlands, Florida, USA. *Photo:* Sam Alexander.



Adult Bonaparte's Gull (*Larus philadelphicus*), 8 Jun 1991, Churchill, Manitoba, Canada. *Photo:* Sam Alexander.



Adult Western Gull (*Larus (o) occidentalis*), 8 Sept 1996, South Jetty, Oregon, USA.

Photo: Sam Alexander.



Heermann's Gull (*Larus heermanni*), 27 May 1992, Monterey, California, USA.

Photo: Sam Alexander.



Adult Tufted Puffin (*Lunda cirrhata*). 13 Jun 2001. St Paul Island, Pribilof Islands, Alaska, USA. Photo: Sam Alexander.

GALAPAGOS VISIT

by Captain NG Cheshire MN

From 6 to 13 April 2001 I was privileged to visit the Galapagos Islands (0°S 91°W) as a member of a group visiting Ecuador organised by RNBWS Sydney representative Alan Rogers. We chose to visit during the first half of April as this is towards the end of the warm season when skies are clear and winds still light allowing easier boat landings. From May to December more overcast weather and stronger winds can be expected. We were also keen to see Waved Albatross which return in late March and come ashore to commence breeding in early April.

Eco-tourism is strictly controlled by the Galapagos National Park Service and only certain islands may be visited. The group must be accompanied by an official guide, stay together on the marked trails and conform to the park rules. A variety of tourist craft are available and the ideal size are those about 25 metres carrying 12-16 passengers plus one guide. Our tour of eight days was time enough to visit the main bird islands, the Charles Darwin Research Station at Puerto Ayora and the highlands of Santa Cruz. Shore excursions were mainly early morning and late afternoon to avoid the midday heat with longer sea passages between the islands made at night. The unique and confiding nature of Galapagos wildlife and the fact that unlike many island groups very few extinctions have occurred, made this a most memorable visit.

Galapagos Penguin *Spheniscus mendiculus*. Small numbers seen around the rocky shore of Bartolome I.

Waved Albatross *Diomedea irrorata*. When we approached Espanola (Hood), the only Galapagos breeding Island, we were concerned the birds had not returned. Our guide had been there 14 days earlier and had seen just a few off-shore. Once ashore on the south side of Espanola, we found about 200 pairs, some performing bill-rattling courtship displays. Half a mile off shore about 1500 birds were rafting on the water. Many birds glided close to the cliff



Waved Albatross (*Diomedea irrorata*), Espanola Island, Galapagos, April 2001. Photo: Captain NG Cheshire MN.



Swallow-tailed Gull (*Creagrus furcatus*) Genovesa Island, Galapagos, April 2001.
Photo: Captain NG Cheshire MN.

edge within a few metres of where we were sitting - an impressive sight. The total population is estimated to be around 60 000 birds. The distribution at sea is mainly between the Galapagos and the coast of S America from southern Colombia to Peru.

Dark-rumped Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia*. Breeding colonies are located in the highlands of several of the larger islands. We had distant views of two large *pterodromas* in company with a school of Killer Whales off the east coast of Santa Cruz on 9 April which were almost certainly Dark-rumped Petrels.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus l'herminieri*. Common at sea around the islands with flocks totalling 4000 feeding along current rips between San Salvador and Santa Cruz on 7 Apr.

Elliot's Storm-petrel *Oceanites gracilis*. Up to 50 following the yacht off Santa Cruz and San Salvador.

Wedge-rumped Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma tethys*. Seen throughout with a maximum count of 200 off Genovesa. On Genovesa it breeds in fissures on a rocky plateau. At the colony a Short-eared Owl was perched on the ground waiting to catch returning Wedge-rumps.

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro*. Small numbers seen on passage between the islands.

Red-billed Tropic Bird *Phaethon aethereus*. Mainly seen around Genovesa and Espanola where several birds gave spectacular flight views close to the cliff edge.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens*. Widespread throughout. The male has a purple sheen to the mantle feathers and the female has a black throat and blue eye ring. On several occasions they came within a few metres of the yachts bridge top.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor*. About 3000 were around the breeding colony at Darwin Bay Genovesa. Males were on their nests displaying with red gular sac inflated and outstretched wings vibrating in an attempt to attract the females circling overhead. At close range the male has a greenish sheen to the mantle and the female has a white throat and diagnostic red eye ring. A juvenile bird with white head and breast with a slight orangey wash was seen here.

Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*. This attractive booby with its large bright blue legs and feet was widespread. At close range females can be separated from males by the apparently larger dark pupil in the pale yellow iris. It is due to additional dark pigment around the pupil.

Nazca Booby *Sula (dactylatra) granti*. The Galapagos sub-species of the Masked Booby has recently been split Pitman & Jehl (1998). There are differences in the juvenile plumage and adults have a mostly orange bill and orange iris and often have white central rectrices. It was nesting on most islands with a maximum of 1000 birds seen around the Darwin Bay area on Genovesa.

Red-footed Booby *Sula sula*. About 200 seen nesting in bushes and dense areas of mangrove on Genovesa. Most were brown phase birds with brown tails and only 3 white birds were present.



Nazca Booby (*Sula granti*), Genovesa Island, Galapagos, April 2001.
Photo: Captain NG Cheshire MN.

Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*. Widespread with many in breeding plumage. Opportunistic Common Noddies were seen perched on the backs of feeding pelicans waiting to snatch food scraps from the water around the pelican's head. (Identical behaviour has been noted in South Australia with Silver Gulls and Australian Pelicans).

Lava Gull *Larus fuliginosus*. One of the world's rarest gulls with only about 400 pairs breeding around the Galapagos. We were fortunate to sight small numbers around the anchorages at Santa Cruz, Genovesa and Floreana.

Swallow-tailed Gull *Creagrus furcatus*. This very attractive gull was present on most of the islands visited. About 100 pairs were nesting at Darwin Bay most with well grown chicks.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla*. Single bird seen at Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz on 9 April.

Common Noddy *Anous stolidus*. Widespread throughout the islands.

We missed the Flightless (or Galapagos) Cormorant as it is confined to the northern part of Isabela and to Fernandina where we did not visit. Separating Darwin's Finches was a challenge to the identification skills of the group. A full list of species seen follows.

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Neil Cheshire 4 Willora Road, Eden Hills, South Australia 5050, Australia.



Lava Gull (*Larus fuliginosus*), 6 Apr 2001, Galapagos.

Photo: N Cheshire

Galapagos Bird List

April 2001

45

Species		6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th
Galapagos Penguin	<i>Spheniscus mendiculus</i>			6					
Waved Albatross	<i>Diomedea irrorata</i>						2 000		
Dark-rumped Petrel	<i>Pterodroma phaeopygia</i>				*				
Audubon's Shearwater	<i>Puffinus l'herminieri</i>	200	4 000	60	40	1 300	250	40	10
Elliot's Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanites gracilis</i>	50	50	10	5				3
Wedge-rumped S-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma tethys</i>			3	200	10	10	50	
Madeiran Storm-petrel	<i>Oceanodroma castro</i>			1	5		6	10	
Red-billed Tropicbird	<i>Phaethon aethereus</i>				30	6		40	
Magnificent Frigatebird	<i>Fregata magnificens</i>	250	50		50	250	40	100	
Great Frigatebird	<i>Fregata minor</i>				3 000				50
Blue-footed Booby	<i>Sula nebouxii</i>			60	40	50	20	40	60
Nazca Booby	<i>Sula granti</i>	2	5	1 000	30	20	200	50	
Red-footed Booby	<i>Sula sula</i>				200		*		
Brown Pelican	<i>Pelecanus occidentalis</i>	5	55	40	20	30	50	40	40
White-cheeked Pintail	<i>Anas bahamensis</i>							6	
Greater Flamingo	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>							15	
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	1			1	1	1		
Great Egret	<i>Ardea alba</i>	1							
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>				200	100	15		
Lava Heron	<i>Butoroides sundevalli</i>	1	6	4	5	2	4	4	1
Yellow-cr Night Heron	<i>Nyctanassa violacea</i>			2	*		*		
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>					1			
Galapagos Hawk	<i>Buteo galapagoensis</i>		2				*	*	
Whimbrel	<i>Numenius phaeopus</i>	1	1	*	*		1		
Wandering Tattler	<i>Heteroscelus incanus</i>	1	3	2	1	*	1	1	1
Willet	<i>Catoptrophorus semipalmatus</i>				2				
Ruddy Turnstone	<i>Arenaria interpres</i>	10		2		3	2	6	3
Sanderling	<i>Calidris alba</i>	3		*		1		1	
Semi-pal Sandpiper	<i>Calidris pusilla</i>							2	
Least Sandpiper	<i>Calidris minutilla</i>							6	

		6 th	7 th	8 th	9 th	10 th	11 th	12 th	13 th
American Oystercatcher	<i>Haematopus palliatus</i>		4				3		
Black-necked Stilt	<i>Himantopus mexicanus</i>	1						1	
Grey Plover	<i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>	1							
Semipalmated Plover	<i>Charadrius semipalmatus</i>	2						1	
Lava Gull	<i>Larus fuliginosus</i>	2		3	4	3			
Laughing Gull	<i>Larus atricilla</i>				1			1	
Swallow-tailed Gull	<i>Creagrus furcatus</i>		3	250	50		50	100	50
Common Noddy	<i>Anous stolidus</i>	300	90	250	50	200	50	20	50
Galapagos Dove	<i>Zenaida galapagoensis</i>		2	3	10	3	20		
Smooth-billed Ani	<i>Crotophaga ani</i>	1	2		2	1			
Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>			1					
Vermilion Flycatcher	<i>Pyrocephalus rubinus</i>					2			
Galapagos Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus magnirostris</i>		1		2		1	*	
Galapagos Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus parvulus</i>	4	4	25	13	4			
Charles Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus trifasciatus</i>							4	
Hood Mockingbird	<i>Nesomimus macdonaldi</i>						6		
Large Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza magnirostris</i>	4	2		4				
Medium Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza fortis</i>	7	*	*		3	10		3
Small Ground Finch	<i>Geospiza fuliginosa</i>		4		2	12	2	4	*
Sharp-beaked Gr Finch	<i>Geospiza difficilis</i>			2				2	
Common Cactus Finch	<i>Geospiza scandens</i>	10		6					
Large Cactus Finch	<i>Geospiza conirostris</i>			2			3		
Vegetarian Finch	<i>Platyspiza crassirostris</i>				*	1			
Large Tree Finch	<i>Camarhynchus psittacula</i>				3	1			
Small Tree Finch	<i>Camarhynchus parvulus</i>				1	2			
Woodpecker Finch	<i>Cractospiza pallica</i>					2			
Warbler Finch	<i>Certhidea olivacea</i>			1		2	1		
Yellow Warbler	<i>Denbrioica petechia</i>	3	2		10		2	4	
Feral Pigeon	<i>Columba livia</i>					3			

Total 59 Species

A PELAGIC CRUISE SOUTH OF THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

by WAJ Cunningham

On April 20 2002 at 0700, while on holiday in Simon's Town, I embarked on the small motor vessel *Zest II* for a cruise to the south of Cape Point in search of oceanic birds. Advertised as *ANNE ALBATROSS CAPE PELAGICS* these expeditions took place weekly on Saturdays from Simons Town's harbour, weather permitting. The weather had been poor on previous occasions, but today we sailed into a spectacular dawn, False Bay like glass.

Our guides for the day were Barry Watkins of Marine & Coastal Management, Alvin Cope and Ian Sinclair, author and illustrator of *Field Guide to the Birds of Southern Africa*. We were instructed to take the greatest care on board and 'hold on with both hands', rather superfluous I, as an old seadog, thought in such perfect conditions. We sailed along the coast past the African Penguin colony at Boulders, noting in addition, Bank, Cape, Crowned and White-breasted Cormorants, Common, Arctic, Swift and Sandwich Terns, Kelp and Hartlaub's Gulls.

On rounding Cape Point, however, we ran into a fresh 20 knot breeze and a one metre swell and the above preliminary warning began to seem justified after all. The violence of the motion in the small boat was such that it became impracticable, without an extra pair of hands, to use binoculars, camera or note book. It seemed even worse than that of a corvette in an Atlantic gale. As an octogenarian with prosthetic knees and a hip I had to be extra careful and I am therefore indebted to Barry Watkin's subsequent report for details of what was seen during the next few hours.

Within the first 5 nautical miles off Cape Point we saw a raft of 40 Cory's Shearwaters, 3 Subantarctic Skuas, 190 Sooty Shearwaters, 650-700 Cape Gannets, one White-chinned Petrel and one Arctic Tern. From 6-12 n.m. from the Point a raft of 40 Sooty Shearwaters, one Great Shearwater, 11 White-chinned Petrels, one Manx Shearwater, two Shy Albatrosses and two Wilson's Storm Petrels were observed. We steamed in a south-westerly direction for about 25 nm when we reached a trawler fishing in a depth of more than 180 metres with 15 White-chinned Petrels, 4 Shy Albatrosses, 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels, one Sub-antarctic Skua, 5 Sooty Shearwaters and a single Great Shearwater in company. The trawler was reached at 1000 while hauling her net. There were excellent sightings of Subantarctic Skuas, hundreds of White-chinned Petrels, hundreds of Shy Albatrosses, hundreds of Black-browed Albatrosses, two adult and one juvenile Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, 55 Cape Gannets, 15 Great Shearwaters, 10 Wilson's Storm-petrels, 3 European Storm-petrels and one Southern Giant Petrel.

Of interest was the fact that >95 per cent of the Black-browed Albatrosses were adults, whereas 40 per cent of the Shy's were adults. Ian Sinclair briefly spotted an unusual Sooty Shearwater with a dark underwing, which may have possibly been a Short-tailed Shearwater, had there been longer and better views.

The wind picked up and the swell was now running at 1.5 to 2 metres. After having spent almost 1.5 hours at the trawler we headed several miles northward to a longliner which had few birds attending: 100 White-chinned Petrels, 6 Wilson's Storm-petrels, 12 Shy Albatrosses, 2 Black-browed Albatrosses, 7 Great Shearwaters, one Sooty Shearwater, 8 Cape Gannets and one adult Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross. Half an hour later we steamed back towards the trawler in a moderate breeze that had switched to a northerly direction. Off the stem of the trawler was one Arctic Tern, and a close flock of 85 Wilson's Storm-petrels was feeding 400 metres behind the vessel.



Cape Point, South Africa, April 2002.

Photo: WAJ Cunningham.

We passed up by the stern of the trawler with bird numbers and species similar as before, then turned to make our way back to port.

'By now the air temperature had dropped several degrees with mist on the water. Birds were few and far between on the way back, a Manx Shearwater in the Bellow's Region being the only one worthy of note.'

At Cape Point the shout of 'Whale' went up - a Bryde's in a hurry to the south. False Bay yielded one Arctic Skua, one Sooty Shearwater and one Arctic Tern.'

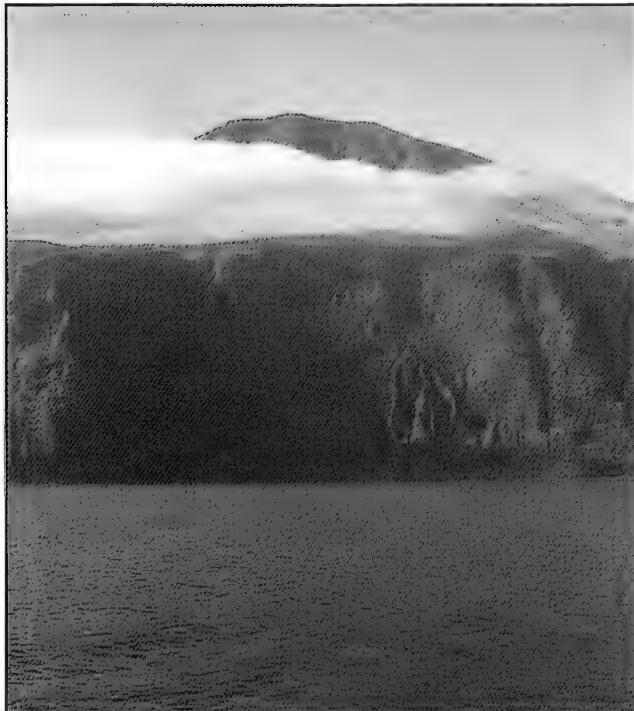
These were the bald facts but the reality was overwhelming. As the huge bag, spilling fish as it came to the surface, came into sight each of the enormous medley of birds seemed to go mad in its efforts to pinch a meal before its neighbour. And these were not just gulls and gannets, to which I was accustomed, but mighty albatrosses and shearwaters in hundreds. I am glad that Watkins used the term 'hundreds' for I am sure I wouldn't have been believed otherwise. I had previously seen Black-browed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses but the Shy's were new to me. It was a fantastic experience to have a Shy Albatross coming at one at sea level trying to scoop up a large fish and abandoning it in order to avoid hitting the side of the boat where one was standing. The net was attacked also by what at first I took to be dolphins but proved to be shoals of Cape Fur Seals, graceful hunters of the sea.

We were abeam of Cape Point and once again in calm waters before the mist suddenly and dramatically lifted and I was enabled to photograph its majestic cliffs and take home more than just memories of a truly wonderful experience.

ANNE ALBATROSS CAPE PELAGICS are run by Anne Gray and for information and bookings visit www.annealbatross.org, or e-mail <anne@annealbatross.org>. Other details on www.google.com and 'Zest for Birds'.

THE REMOTEST ISLAND - TRISTAN DA CUHNA

by Lt Cdr Gary Lewis, Royal Navy



Tristan da Cuhna from *HMS Montrose*, January 2002.

Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy.

After three previous unsuccessful attempts in both the old *HMS Endurance* and *HMS Hecla*, I eventually succeeded in landing on Tristan da Cuhna whilst deployed on Area Patrol Tasking (South) in *HMS Montrose*.

The island claims to be the remotest inhabited island in the world and it is not difficult to believe the claim. We arrived off the island, in the company of *RFA Grey Rover*, on 9 January 2002 having sailed direct from Cape Town on 3 January. Our arrival was greatly anticipated; apart from the four monthly supply ships from South Africa, the annual visit from *RMS St Helena* and the infrequent Cruise Liner, we were one of the rare outside visitors to the compact community.

The Tristan da Cuhna archipelago comprises three islands of volcanic origin and the main island is the only one inhabited. Even this habitation is tenuous; it was only in the 1960s that the islanders had to be evacuated for a period due to new volcanic activity that threatened the settlement. However, the settlement survived and is now a thriving community of just over 300 that rely on fishing for Crayfish, growing potatoes and modest tourism for their income. The settlement is perched on the only flat piece of terrain available on the otherwise precipitous 7000 ft volcano.

It was with great relief that 9 January dawned clear and windless; the omens for landing were good and the island was clear on the horizon even at 30 miles away. I took the opportunity to

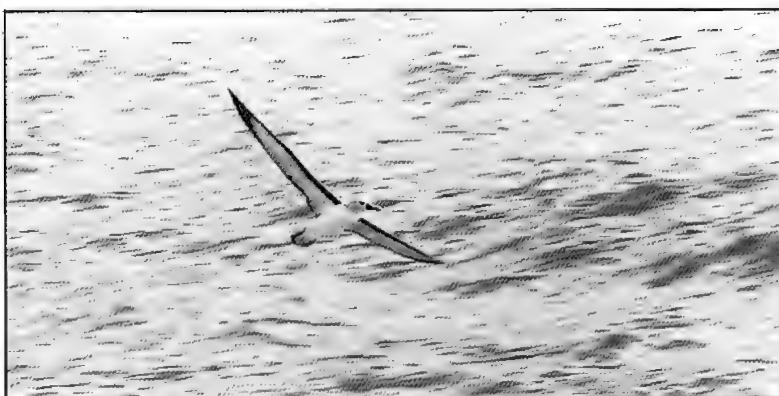
spend the next hour on the bridge wing and was overwhelmed by the seabird numbers that we encountered. By far the most numerous were Yellow-nosed Albatross with counts in excess of 250 at any one time. Interspersed with these were a handful of Black-browed Albatross, a single sub-adult Wandering Albatross and sporadic Wilson's Storm-petrels. As the ship got closer to the island the numbers of Yellow-nosed Albatross increased and the other species were replaced by individuals of both Sooty and Light Mantled Sooty Albatross.

The ship anchored off the settlement and the rest of the day was taken up with routine diplomacy; members of the ship's company were landed using the islanders boats in order to sightsee whilst some of the islanders were given ships tours. The ship played the island at cricket whilst some intrepid golfers braved sheep and cows to play on the 'interesting' 9 hole course. At anchor, the ship continued to be circled by large numbers of Yellow-nosed Albatross and a single Sooty Albatross remained in the vicinity all day. These were joined by over a dozen Sub-Antarctic Skuas looking for scraps from the fishing activity taking place on the flight deck and the ensign staff became a roost for 2 Antarctic Terns.

The number of Albatross, particularly Yellow-nosed was truly remarkable; the off islands are recognised as significant breeding colonies for the species and the success of this species seems assured whilst the islands remain off the major cruise liner routes. The islanders are acutely conscious of their heritage and responsibility towards conservation of this unique habitat. Trips to the off islands are restricted and I was extremely privileged to be able to spend the afternoon with two locals taking a helicopter trip to Inaccessible Island where I added the flightless Inaccessible Rail, an endemic, to my world list. Although not a seabird, the opportunity was much appreciated.

Although brief, *Montrose*'s visit to Tristan da Cuhna was a unique experience for all onboard. To have a glimpse of life so different to what we consider 'normal' and to be privileged to witness birdlife in such quantity was fantastic for a birder like myself. Equally the opportunity to see birds so close and well, made other members of the ship's company aware of the diversity of natural phenomena around them. On a personal note the visit allowed me to complete the 'set' of South Atlantic islands; how many other RNBWS members have visited Ascension, St Helena and Tristan da Cuhna? Not many I suspect.

HMS Montrose
BFPO 339



Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Diomedea chlororhynchos*) Trista da Cuhna,
S Atlantic, January 2002. Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy.



HMS Montrose anchored off Trista da Cuhna, January 2002.

Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy.



Remotest Island Welcome Sign, Trista da Cuhna, S Atlantic, January 2002.

Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy.

SOUTH GEORGIA - THEN AND NOW**by Lt Cdr Gary Lewis, Royal Navy**

My initial visit to South Georgia was in 1979 as a young Sub Lieutenant in my first complement appointment as Captain's Secretary *HMS Endurance*. As part of the Ice Patrol Ship's tasking, she was to visit the island at some point during the summer season in the Antarctic, to provide a visible presence in support of the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) base at Grytviken. Compulsory reading was of the exploits of Shackleton during his abortive ENDURANCE expedition of 1915; his son was a sponsor of our ship and the initial views of the island confirmed the magnitude of that 'boys own' story.

Twenty three years later, now Squadron Supply Officer to the Captain Sixth Frigate Squadron embarked in *HMS Montrose*, I revisited the island probably for the last time. I have vivid memories of my first visit; we spent a number of days at Grytviken and the other derelict whaling stations of Leith and Husvik as well as exploring other inlets on the northern coastline. The ship re-supplied Bird Island where Cindy Buxton and a colleague were spending the summer filming for Anglia TV and we had direct support and contact with the BAS personnel at the rudimentary base at Grytviken.

On returning 23 years on, the initial views indicated not a lot had changed; the island remained as imposing as remembered and the weather kinder (or had numerous sea appointments in the interim toughened me?). However, dramatic changes had taken place as the following days would show, not only to the landscape, but comparison of my bird records for the two visits would also indicate change. By chance, *Montrose*'s programme almost mirrored my first visit - we spent time at Grytviken, anchored off Husvik and I was lucky enough to grab a seat on the Lynx helicopter for a re-supply visit to the BAS enclave at Bird Island.

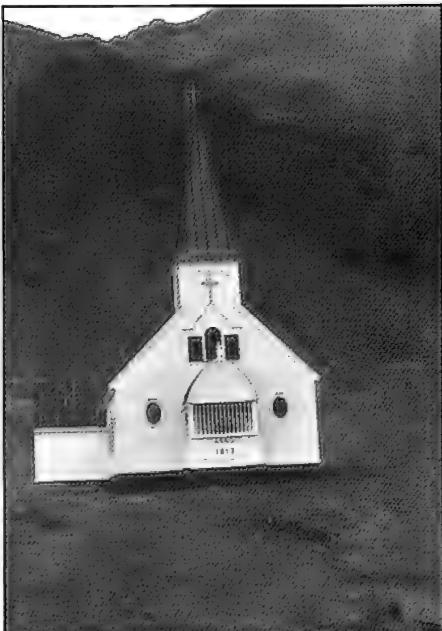


King Edward Point/Grytviken Whaling Station, S Georgia, February 2002.

Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy HMS Montrose.



Shackleton's Grave, Grytviken, S Georgia, February 2002. Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy, *HMS Montrose*.



Grytviken Whaling Station Church, Grytviken, S Georgia, February 2002. Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy, *HMS Montrose*.

During the intervening years the whaling stations have deteriorated significantly to the extent both Grytviken and Husvik are dangerous and out of bounds. The only exception to this is the church and Manager's house at Grytviken; the latter has been restored and houses a fascinating museum reflecting Shackleton's exploits and documenting the history of whaling in the region. It also has a very comprehensive tourist souvenir outlet designed for the dramatic increase in cruise liner activity. The BAS station at King Edward Point, Grytviken has expanded and been modernised - no longer do the inhabitants espouse the British principles of it must be uncomfortable to be science. Similarly the BAS outpost on Bird Island, whilst comparatively rudimentary, is a quantum leap better than the hut Cindy Buxton used back in 1979.

Weather records for the 23 years show a slight rise in temperature and more of the island is ice free in the summer. The major glaciers have receded, though are still very impressive, and the amount of icebergs and bergy bits we encountered in 2002 was a lot less than 1979. This does not provide incontrovertible evidence of 'global warming', but add to the belief this is the case. Much was made of the need to be careful in the sun due to the deterioration of the ozone layer over Antarctica and a number of *Montrose*'s crew ignored advice to their subsequent discomfort.

As to the avifauna what changes were evident? With the exception of Bird Island, the numbers of Black-browed Albatross were lower. I didn't see the huge numbers that had impressed me back in 1979. However, Kelp Gulls and Wilson's Storm-petrels were more numerous and a pleasant hour was spent watching dozens of Petrels in Husvik Bay - many more



Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus tropicalis gazella*), Grytviken, S Georgia, February 2002. Photo: Lt Cdr GD Lewis, Royal Navy, *HMS Montrose*.

than I recorded previously. South Georgian Diving Petrels were apparently very common on my first visit; I saw only one this time and that was further out at sea. Once ashore, the Gentoo Penguin colonies were similar, but there was an increase in King Penguins with good numbers of moulting adults both at Grytviken and Husvik.

Remembering my struggle to find both South Georgia Pintail and South Georgia Pipit back in 1979, it was a surprise to see both on the short walk from Grytviken to the whalers' graveyard where Shackleton is buried. However, you still had to run the gauntlet of both Fur and Southern Elephant Seals to reach Shackleton's grave and they still moved as quickly as I remembered.

What had not changed with the passage of time was the diversity and quantity of seabirds on and around Bird Island. A Lynx flight in glorious weather along the north coast revealed a paucity of seabirds within a few miles of the coast, but once within two miles of Bird Island a magnificent spectacle unfolded. Untold thousands of Albatross, Prions, Petrels and Cormorants meant that the pilot had to navigate with extreme caution to avoid the possibility of a birdstrike and to minimise environmental disturbance. A one wheel landing whilst stores were landed saw us surrounded by both Fur Seals and nesting Black-browed Albatross. A few seconds later we were returning back to the ship.

So, a journey of many memories and a few assumptions as to the current state of the wilderness that is South Georgia. Whilst still a magnificent seabird spectacle, it would appear that 'global warming' and a significant increase in visitors have made some species retreat to the more remote areas of an already wild region. There has been an increase in the landbird population and the penguin population remains healthy. One final memory - a potential first for South Georgia in the form of a female Peregrine seen hunting around Grytviken. Where had she come from? There are records for the Falklands, but it is a further 900 miles to South Georgia.

HMS Montrose
BFPO 339

**LACUL SARATURII - AN IMPORTANT
NESTING AREA IN THE DANUBE DELTA, ROMANIA**
by Gabriel Banica



Lacul Saraturu (Lake Saraturu), Romania, 28 May 1999. Photo: Gabriel Banica.

The Danube Delta is recognised as one of the most remarkable wetland areas of Europe with a rich avifauna. To the south near the Sfantu Gheorghe branch and to the south west of the village of Murighiol (45km east of Tulcea) there is a small lake locally known as 'Lacul Saraturii' or 'Saraturile de la Murighiol'.

The lake is 2km long with a maximum width of 500m - an overall surface area of about 90 hectares. Depth does not exceed 1.5m, but the level is subject to seasonal variation. It is brackish bordered by reed beds with a number of sandy/muddy islands which are ideal nesting sites for a variety of birds. Gulls, Terns and Waders are the main inhabitants with smaller populations of Grebes, Herons, Swans, Ducks, Moorhens, Coots, White Wagtail and Warbler.

As a result of five trips made to the region (18 September 1993, 11 July 1994, 25 June 1995, 28 May 1999 and 25 June 2000), I have compiled a broad outline of nesting species and their numbers:

Great Crested Grebe (<i>Podiceps cristatus</i>)	1-2 pairs
Mute Swan (<i>Cygnus olor</i>)	1 pair
Shelduck (<i>Tadorna tadorna</i>)	1-2 pairs
Mallard (<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>)	2-3 pairs
Gadwall (<i>Anas strepera</i>)	5-10 pairs
Pochard (<i>Aythya ferina</i>)	5-10 pairs
Ferruginous Duck (<i>Aythya nyroca</i>)	5-10 pairs
Moorhen (<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>)	1-2 pairs
Coot (<i>Fulica atra</i>)	10-12 pairs

Sea Swallow 51 (2002)

Avocet (<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i>)	2-3 pairs
Black-winged Stilt (<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>)	20-40 pairs
Yellow-legged Gull (<i>Larus cachinnans</i>)	20-30 pairs
Mediterranean Gull (<i>Larus melanocephalus</i>)	10-25 pairs
Black-headed Gull (<i>Larus ridibundus</i>)	circa 500 pairs
Common Tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)	500-600 pairs

This list is not complete and future research will add significantly to the knowledge of the area. However, it is already noted as an important area with respect to its small size:

- It is the only known nesting site of Mediterranean Gull in Romania
- It is one of the few nesting sites in Romania for both Avocet and Black-winged Stilt
- It has a small population of Ferruginous Duck which is still regarded as an endangered species in Europe
- The breeding colonies of both Black-headed Gull and Common Tern are large with respect to size of the lake

Additionally the area is a key stopover for both spring and autumn migration and has hosted a number of rare visitors including a single record of Buff-backed Heron. The area is protected as a part of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve and is recognised as an Important Bird Area within that Reserve. The following is a composite checklist of the species recorded during the five visits and add to the study of the Danube Delta as a whole.



White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*) Murighiol Village, Romania, 28 May 1999.
Photo: Gabriel Banica.

Sea Swallow 51 (2002)

1. Little Grebe	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i> (Pallas)
2. Great Crested Grebe	<i>Podiceps cristatus</i> (Linnaeus)
3. Red-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps grisegena</i> (Boddaert)
4. Black-necked Grebe	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i> (C.L.Brehm)
5. Cormorant	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i> (Linnaeus)
6. White Pelican	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> Linnaeus
7. Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i> (Linnaeus)
8. Night-Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> (Linnaeus)
9. Buff-backed Heron	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i> (Linnaeus)
10. Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i> (Linnaeus)
11. Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i> (Linnaeus)
12. Purple Heron	<i>Ardea purpurea</i> (Linnaeus)
13. White Stork	<i>Ciconia ciconia</i> (Linnaeus)
14. Glossy Ibis	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> (Linnaeus)
15. Mute Swan	<i>Cygnus olor</i> (Gmelin)
16. Greylag Goose	<i>Anser anser</i> (Linnaeus)
17. Shelduck	<i>Tadorna tadorna</i> (Linnaeus)
18. Gadwall	<i>Anas strepera</i> (Linnaeus)
19. Teal	<i>Anas crecca</i> (Linnaeus)
20. Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> (Linnaeus)
21. Shoveler	<i>Anas clypeata</i> (Linnaeus)
22. Pochard	<i>Aythya ferina</i> (Linnaeus)
23. Ferruginous Duck	<i>Aythya nyroca</i> (Guldenstadt)
24. Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i> (Linnaeus)
25. Common Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i> (Linnaeus)
26. Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i> (Linnaeus)
27. Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i> (Linnaeus)
28. Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i> (Linnaeus)
29. Coot	<i>Fulica atra</i> (Linnaeus)
30. Black-winged Stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i> (Linnaeus)
31. Avocet	<i>Recurvirostra avosetta</i> (Linnaeus)
32. Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i> (Linnaeus)
33. Black-tailed Godwit	<i>Limosa limosa</i> (Linnaeus)
34. Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i> (Linnaeus)
35. Spotted Redshank	<i>Tringa erythropus</i> (Pallas)
36. Redshank	<i>Tringa totanus</i> (Linnaeus)
37. Marsh Sandpiper	<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> (Bechstein)
38. Wood Sandpiper	<i>Tringa glareola</i> (Linnaeus)
39. Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> (Linnaeus)
40. Mediterranean Gull	<i>Larus melanocephalus</i> (Tenminck)
41. Black-headed Gull	<i>Larus ridibundus</i> (Linnaeus)
42. Yellow-legged Gull	<i>Larus cachinnans</i> (Pallas)
43. Caspian Tern	<i>Sterna caspia</i> (Pallas)
44. Common Tern	<i>Sterna hirundo</i> (Linnaeus)
45. Little Tern	<i>Sterna albifrons</i> (Pallas)

46. Whiskered Tern	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i> (Pallas)
47. Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i> (Linnaeus)
48. White-winged Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> (Temminck)
49. Collared Dove	<i>Streptopelia decaocto</i> (Frivaldszky)
50. Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i> (Linnaeus)
51. Swift	<i>Apus apus</i> (Linnaeus)
52. Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i> (Linnaeus)
53. Roller	<i>Coracias garrulus</i> (Linnaeus)
54. Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i> (Linnaeus)
55. Grey-headed Woodpecker	<i>Picus canus</i> (Gmelin)
56. Great Spotted Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos major</i> (Linnaeus)
57. Syrian Woodpecker	<i>Dendrocopos syriacus</i> (Hemprich et Ehrenberg)
58. Crested Lark	<i>Galerida cristata</i> (Linnaeus)
59. Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i> (Linnaeus)
60. Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i> Linnaeus
61. House Martin	<i>Delichon urbica</i> (Linnaeus)
62. Tawny Pipit	<i>Anthus campestris</i> (Linnaeus)
63. White Wagtail	<i>Motacilla alba</i> (Linnaeus)
64. Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i> (Hermann)
65. Great Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus arundinaceus</i> (Linnaeus)
66. Whitethroat	<i>Sylvia communis</i> (Latham)
67. Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i> (Pallas)
68. Blue Tit	<i>Parus caeruleus</i> (Linnaeus)
69. Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i> (Linnaeus)
70. Red-backed Shrike	<i>Lanius collurio</i> (Linnaeus)
71. Lesser Grey Shrike	<i>Lanius minor</i> (Gmelin)
72. Magpie	<i>Pica pica</i> (Linnaeus)
73. Jackdaw	<i>Corvus monedula</i> (Linnaeus)
74. Rook	<i>Corvus frugilegus</i> (Linnaeus)
75. Hooded Crow	<i>Corvus corone cornix</i> (Linnaeus)
76. Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> (Linnaeus)
77. House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i> (Linnaeus)
78. Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i> (Linnaeus)
79. Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i> (Linnaeus)
80. Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> (Linnaeus)

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Sea Swallow 51 (2002)

Wildlife of Coastal Waters: British Isles.
Soper, Tony, with illustrations by Powell, Dan.
Bradt Travel guides UK 2002. ISBN 1 84162 058 0.
Pp 160, numerous illustrations, £14.95

I have not come across the Bradt Travel Guides before. The review quotations in their catalogue speak of a high reputation based on delivering substance to a discerning tour audience. Included in the catalogue are two highly acclaimed guides to the wildlife of the Arctic and Antarctic by our RNBWS member Tony Soper. In 2002 he launched this new guide in time for the Southampton Boat Show.

'No cabin should be without a copy' declares the catalogue, and this guide is clearly aimed principally at the cruise market which Tony knows so well between 'Britannia and North Cape'. The aim is 'to provide enough to keep you going till you're back ashore to a decent library'. Sections on Fish, Turtles, Birds, Seals and Whales perform this task admirably, with succinct descriptions, paintings which catch the 'jizz', and an account of distribution and species history. I was particularly struck by the atmosphere of the paintings. Those of the birds really did remind me of encounters in our remarkable Home Waters. A liberal sprinkling of reproductions of nineteenth century engravings adds to the attraction of the presentation.

This most certainly is the book to give to a complete novice setting off on a sea-trip, and I would be surprised if it does not catch the imagination and spur the enthusiasm of some new sea observers. But it should not be neglected by seasoned watchers of the deep. There are some gems of observation and research from the years of practical experience of the author.

RNBWS features prominently in the list of useful addresses, and I hope that this new guide may bring fresh blood to our contributors of sightings.

MKB



Adult Razorbills (*Alca torda*), 16 Jul 2001, Fowlsheugh, Nr Stonehaven.
Photo: Sam Alexander

TAILPIECE: A HIGH FLYER OVER 'THE ADMIRAL'

by Stan Howe

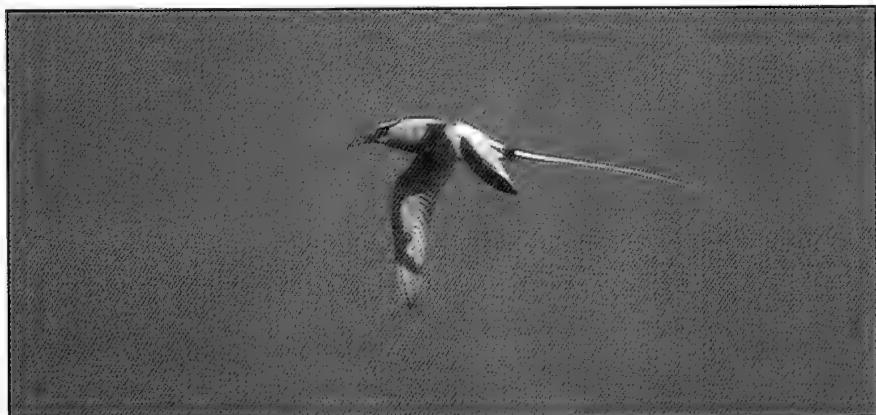
Over the years a number of Combined Services Expedition reports have been reported in the pages of *Sea Swallow*. Royal Navy personnel have taken part as members to places as diverse as the frozen wastes of the Greenland Ice-cap (SS:06) and the blistering rocks of the Tibesti Mountains (SS11) deep in the Sahara desert. Thanks to them improbable birds on our database of published records include Rock Ptarmigan (*Lagopus mutus*) and Denham's Bustard (*Denotis denhami*).

Other teams have set up camp more than once in the South Shetlands. However one foray that does not appear to have been mentioned was the South Georgia Expedition of 1964-65 led by Lt Cdr Malcolm Burley RN, sometime serving officer on *HMS Protector* in those same Antarctic waters. Idly browsing the world wide web* I stumbled across a recently added account by ex-sailor Peter Langdon of that expedition. It achieved its first aim, to retrace the footsteps of the three-man Shackleton party's epic crossing of the island's Dividing Range half a century earlier. By Christmas they had not only done this, but in the process confirmed how accurately their intrepid leader in his book 'South' had related that desperately hazardous journey. Even the mysterious extra 'presence' accompanying Shackleton and his men had been once again felt.

The second aim was to scale the unconquered summit of the island's highest peak behind Grytviken. Named for Admiral Sir Alfred Paget (1852-1918) it had until then withstood many attempts by would-be Sherpa Tensing. However, though not without difficulty, this too was achieved, and by 05:22Z on 30 December 1964 members of the Combined Services team stood atop Mount Paget at 9625' to enjoy a 360 degree panoramic view in rare fine weather and good visibility. And on this auspicious occasion the mysterious 'presence' was made flesh; wheeling around them in the sky was a lone Snow Petrel (*Pagodroma nivea*).

* <http://www.geocities.com/syendurance/jointser.html>

Alma House AB31 4FR
June 2002



Red-billed Tropic Bird (*Phaethon aethereus*), 11 April 2001, Espanola Is, Galapagos.
Photo: N Cheshire.

 *Sea Swallow 51 (2002)*

Joining Form

THE ROYAL NAVAL BIRDWATCHING SOCIETY (RNBWS)

1. I am interested in joining the RNBWS and wish to be enrolled as: (as appropriate)

Full Member £8 (or £7 covenanted)

Associate Member (those not eligible as a full member but wishing to assist the objectives of the society) £8 (or £7 covenanted)

Library Member (receives *Sea Swallow* only) cost of *Sea Swallow* (£8) plus postage

2. Name, initials, rank and decorations (BLOCK LETTERS)

3. Permanent address*

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.....
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4. Present Ship or Station*

5. Subscription herewith: £.....

Please send me a Banker's order form and Covenant form

Date..... Signature.....

To: The Hon. Secretary, RNBWS, 16 Cutlers Lane, Stubbington, Fareham, Hants PO14 2JN. Tel: 01329 665931

*Please inform the Hon Secretary of any changes

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On the and thereafter each 1st January, unless I instruct you in writing to the contrary, please remit to **The Manager, Lloyds Bank PLC, 49 High Street, Winchester, Hants. SO23 9BU** for the account of the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society. Sort Code 30-99-71 Account No. 0117948, the sum of pounds and debit my account.

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I promise to pay you during my lifetime, such a sum as after deduction of income tax at the basic rate, amounts to £..... (1) per annum, provided that I may revoke in writing this deed of covenant at any time after the expiry of FOUR years from

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Signed and delivered.....(3)

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Signed.....

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1. Enter the amount you will be paying the charity.
2. If you choose to enter an actual date it must not be earlier than the date you sign the deed.
3. You must sign the form, and enter the date you actually sign it in the presence of the witness, who should also sign where shown.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Hon. Member and Adviser RNBWS: Dr W R P Bourne MBOU CFA0U, Zoology Dept. University of Aberdeen, Tillydrome Ave, Aberdeen AB9 2TN (Home Tel: 01340 820569)

RNBWS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES - UNITED KINGDOM

Dartmouth: Dr Richard Porter, Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 0HJ (01803 837233).

Devonport Area: K E Partridge, 165 Stanborough Road, Elburton, Plymouth, Devon PL9 8NY (01752 404475).

Portsmouth Area: Lt Cdr B F Witts OBE FRGS RN, Oakwood, Duffield Lane, Woodmancote, Emsworth, Hants PO10 8PZ (01243 371497).

Portland: Martin Cade, Portland Bird Observatory and Field Centre, Old Lower Light, Portland, Dorset (01305 820553 Daytime only).

Southampton: Frank Vosey, 53 Rotterdam Towers, International Way, Weston, Southampton Hants (01703 44038).

Scotland - Faslane & Rosyth: No representative

Humber Area: Bill Curtis, Farm Cottage, Church Lane, Atwick, Nr Driffield E Yorks YO25 8DH (01964 532477).

South Wales: M Sullivan, 219 College Road, Whitechurch, Cardiff CF4 2NV.

RNBWS LOCAL REPRESENTATIVES - OVERSEAS

Arabian Gulf: Colin Richardson c/o Emirates Bird Records Committee, PO Box 50394, Dubai, United Arab Emirates (Tel/Fax +9714 472277, Mobile +97150 6503398).

Australia: Captain N G Cheshire MN, 4 Willora Rd, Eden Hills, Adelaide, South Australia 5050 (Tel. Adelaide (08) 8370 2212).

or

A E F Rogers, 26 Westleigh Drive, Westleigh, Sydney, New South Wales 2120.

Black Sea: Gabriel Banica, Str. 1 Decembrie 1918 m-, 3. BI.FIT Ap49, 8700 Constantia, Romania

Bombay: J S Serreo, Bombay Natural History Society, Hornbill House, Bombay 400-023, India (Tel: 24 38 69/24 40 85).

Falkland Islands: Ian Strange, The Dolphins, Port Stanley, Falkland Islands.

Gibraltar: Dr Clive Finlayson, 30 Ross House, Red Sands Road, Gibraltar.

Madeira: Dr Francis Zino, Avenida do Infante 26, Rez-do-Chao 'C', 9000 Funchal, Madeira (Tel: 63292)

Naples: Mark Walters, 181 Via Morghe, Vomero, Naples, Italy.

USA: Dr R G Wolk PhD, 6001 Clare Court, Raleigh North Carolina 27609, USA. Tel: 919 848 4812.

INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Interested persons are invited to submit contributions for *Sea Swallow*, authors do not need to be RNBWS members. Material may take the form of papers, notes, progress reports, letters or reviews.

The style used in *Sea Swallow*, should be followed, with the standard abbreviations, nomenclature and use of references.

Manuscripts should ideally be typed in double spacing, together with figures and diagrams. Accompanying photographs are preferred as prints rather than slides. Those with facilities to do so are encouraged to send on IBM PC compatible 3.5" disc (specifying the word processing software used), together with a hard copy print. ASCII back-tip text is also desirable.

Contributions are welcome at any time, but if for inclusion in the next edition must reach the editor by 31 May.